

# *Captain Sentimental*

EDGAR JEPSON





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CAPTAIN  
SENTIMENTAL  
AND OTHER STORIES

BY  
EDGAR JEPSON  
AUTHOR OF "NO. 19"

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## CAPTAIN SENTIMENTAL

ON paper the life of an Irregular is a gay and gallant one: when you come to live it, in South Africa, at any rate, there is no gilt on that gingerbread. I was a joyful man when I became a trooper in the Frontier Mounted Rifles; and at the end of a year of it I was a wise one, as wise, at any rate, as I am ever likely to be. When you have now and again been so put to it for food that you have stolen the mealies from your horse for a week on end to keep the life in you; when you have lain, night after night, on the bare Karroo in a steady, chilling rain, with a sodden blanket only between you and the sky; when, after a hard day, you have gone to bed hungry, and been awakened at midnight to ride express twenty or thirty miles, stupid with sleep, on a tired horse, over a rough country full of hostile niggers; then you have learned all there is to be learned about your constitution, your muscles, and your temper. And if that knowledge does not make a man wise, nothing will.

These things try you; but they are all in the day's, or night's, work. You grow really riled when one of the Bad Hats in your squad steals your clothes

or your coffee or sugar ; or, when you settle down in a permanent camp, to find the thatch of your hut no better than a sieve. Above all, it is heart-breaking to ride twenty miles through the dark, and when you make your dash to find that the niggers have bolted ; for, after all, nailing them is what you are there for.

When the Transvaal war broke out, six of us were up in Montsioa's country recovering cattle stolen from a farmer on the Northern Bechuana border ; and for our sins Captain Sentimental himself had come in command of us. De Spenser had given him the name, after overhearing him, one night when he was on sentry-go, talking about women to Captain Warrender, of the Mounted Police, with whom he had dined. De Spenser said that he never heard such shrivelling and sulphurous talk ; it had made him feel squeamish, which was very hard to believe, and should have blasted every woman within ten miles. He gave us a few samples of it ; and when he said that Captain Sentimental was his name, we felt that he was right. Before that we had called him Captain Hell-to-you, for many reasons, all of them good. He was a big, black man, the blackest white man I ever saw ; his skin was white enough when he stripped for a bathe ; but his face and neck and hands and wrists burned in the hot weather to an uncommonly dark brown ; his eyes were black ; and his hair, moustache, and beard were coal-black. For all his blackness he was of a neatness that in a campaign or on an expedi-

tion was truly diabolical : no matter how rough the work, or how long it had lasted, you always saw him with his hair short, his beard neatly clipped, and his hands fit for a dinner at Marlborough House ; and Jam, his Kafir boy, would brush at him while he smoked his last pipe at night and his first pipe in the morning, till he started the day with the cleanest uniform and boots in the expedition. His temper was, if anything, blacker than his beard ; he was for ever bully-damning us ; he hazed us perpetually with hundreds of needless little jobs, and called it keeping us in condition ; he took ten times as much care of our horses as he did of us, and told us so. He never had a civil word for any one ; he never smiled ; and Urquhart, the only man who had ever heard his laugh, said that he never wanted to hear it again. But after De Spenser told Baring, Urquhart, and me of his talk about women, we called him Captain Sentimental, and grinned at his temper. He might grind out the rasping, unfair jeers, which made the hardest-bitten old roustabout in the squadron squirm, at us, and we only grinned. We knew all about women : we had been there ourselves.

He was a leader, though ! He had the finest knack of nursing his squadron, and bringing it fitter into action than any one else's. He knew the exact moment when to let us out to hit our hardest, and when to draw us gently out of a tight place. And when we did come out, we knew that we had done every bit of damage possible. Nothing else could

have induced a squadron of such wastrels to stand his hazing.

By the last days of October we had gathered into our camp, a head or two at a time, the stolen cattle, and were feeding them up and resting them for the long journey south. We had nine prisoners whom Captain Sentimental proposed to take back with him to civilisation, because he said that a civilised flogging with the proper ceremonies was better reported, and more soothing to the tribes than a flogging ten times as severe at the back-end of the world. He had been away from us for some days, shooting big game with a chief, and his absence had not damped our spirits. One morning he rode into the camp with Jam, just as we had finished grooming our horses, reined up before us, and said, dropping out his words one by one as though they were too good to waste on such as us: "Scum of the World,"—his pretty way of addressing us—"the Transvaal and Free State have declared war against England."

We shouted; and he went on, "I'm going to let the trackers try and drive the cattle back—not that they can. And I'm going to take you to Mafeking. Be smart!"

We shouted again, rushed to fill our haversacks and water-bottles, and in five minutes were in our saddles and riding slowly southwards. We did not even wait to flog the prisoners. We raged at the pace Captain Sentimental set; but there was very little grass, and any hard work would surely founder



our horses. We talked and talked of the war, where the fighting would be, what it would be like, and how long it would last. By noon on the third day we had gone some seventy miles, and expected to reach the Molopo next morning, when we should find more fodder, and therefore faster going.

On the day before we had passed two or three kraals, and found them humming like angry beehives. It looked as though trouble was brewing ; but the niggers did not go beyond yelling at us. About noon we were riding up a long, stony ridge, hoping to see beyond it a likely shady place for our midday meal, when there came over it the sound of rifle-shots and yelling.

"Open order !" shouted Captain Sentimental ; and led us at a hand-gallop to the top of the ridge.

We looked down the further slope on a wagon surrounded by a hundred joyful, yelling niggers, looting it.

"This is the kind of devilry I've been looking for !" Captain Sentimental growled savagely. "Pick your men ! Six hundred yards ! Fire !"

We fired a volley which bowled over three or four ; the others yelled, and began to fire at us. We knew their shooting ; they could not have hit a liner at the distance ; and we walked our horses quietly down the ridge, halting every few yards to fire. Before we had gone a hundred and fifty yards we had them on the run ; we quickened our pace to a trot, and then to a canter, that we might keep

them at a comfortable range ; and we dotted their line of flight with sprawling bodies. As we passed the wagon, Captain Sentimental called to me to look to it. I cantered up to it, the common, well-worn, and rather rickety wagon of the small trader, and, as I pulled up, heard the wailing of a baby. The oxen, outspanned, were scattered over the plain ; by a newly kindled fire lay the bodies of the trader and two Kafir drivers, riddled with bullets from a shallow donga sixty yards away, where the ambush had lain.

I dismounted, and looked into the wagon. A glance showed me the body of a woman huddled in the far corner, among the folds of a roll of bright blue cloth which the niggers had half unwound. Her head was smashed in, and across her feet lay a little baby, screaming. I climbed into the wagon, swearing under my breath, but very fully. It smelt like a butcher's shop in hot weather, and I wanted to get out of it quickly. I picked up the child, and climbed down with it. It screamed dismally, wriggling.

I stood looking about, feeling rather sick, when Captain Sentimental came trotting up with the others: "Any one left alive?" he snarled.

"Only a baby, sir," I answered.

He pulled up, looked at me and the child, which I was what you would call dandling, and burst into a storm of swearing. I stared at him, still stupid from the sight under the wagon-tilt and not understanding. He ended with, "You dunder-headed,

bottle-nosed baboon ! Is that how you hold a baby ? Support its back ! ” pitched himself off his horse, dashed at me, snatched the baby from me, balanced it somehow on the flat of his big hand, swung it to and fro very gently, and in about a minute it had stopped screaming, and was blinking. We looked at one another, and a kind of gasp went round.

He propped the baby on his arm somehow, went and peered under the wagon-tilt, and swore. One by one the others did the same. Then we stood in an undecided group, waiting for him to speak, and the baby began to wail.

He thought a moment, and said, “ Bury the man and his wife. Be smart ! We may have three hundred niggers on our track in an hour ; and the sooner we’re out of this the better.”

De Spenser found a spade in the fore part of the wagon. Baring and Capell let down the back, and lifted the dead woman out.

They wound a blanket round the body, and brought it to the place, about fifty yards away, where De Spenser had already broken ground. Captain Sentimental climbed into the wagon, and we heard him rummaging.

Digging quickly by turns, we soon had a grave dug, and lowered the man and woman into it. Then, since it was a woman we were burying, De Spenser, the corner of his eye turned uncomfortably back towards the wagon in fear of Captain Sentimental’s hearing him, said a prayer and some texts

out of the Burial Service. We filled up the grave and heaped a pile of stones on it.

We came back to the wagon, and found Captain Sentimental watching a tin pot full of milk on the fire. A small pile of baby clothes, little three-cornered pieces of blanket, a sponge, and a puff-box lay beside it; and on a blanket lay the baby, sleeping.

He looked at us thoughtfully for a moment, and said, "You may as well be useful for once. Take these things, and keep them dry, or I'll ask you why they're not." And he divided the little pile among us, two or three pieces to a man.

While we were stowing them away the milk boiled, and he poured it into his water-bottle. Then he fastened the tin pot to his saddle, rolled the baby in a blanket, and mounted, carrying it before him. We rode away at a good pace, Jam hanging a couple of miles in our rear, Montgomery and Urquhart half a mile in front, to look out for niggers. We had ridden for an hour when the baby began to howl; and we drew up nearer to Captain Sentimental to see what would happen. He shifted it on to his other arm, and it was quiet. Presently it began again, and he shifted it back. But at the end of another mile it was howling steadily, and he bade us halt and eat our meal. We dismounted, sat or sprawled twenty yards away from him, and began to chew our biltong with an eye on his doings.

He poured some milk into the silver cup of his flask, set the baby on his left arm, and began to feed



it with a teaspoon. Plainly it was not used to being fed in that way ; for it howled and choked piteously, and howled and choked again. It was dreadful to see it choke. Every time he propped it forward and patted its back ; and once, turning a raging eye upon us, he growled across to us, " Just like a woman ! Senseless jades ! Here she was in a wild country, and never taught it to drink. Damned senseless jades all of them ! "

" Yes, sir," we said together.

It was so seldom that he came so far out of his sulkiness as to speak to us, that we were in a hurry to say the right thing. Besides, we agreed with him.

He was a good half-hour feeding it ; and when he stood up he stamped up and down as though it had cramped him, and wiped quite a lot of sweat off his forehead. It fell asleep in a few minutes, and we rode on. But presently it awoke, and screamed for nearly an hour. Do what he would, Captain Sentimental could not quiet it, and again and again he cursed all women for senseless jades who did not teach their children to drink cows' milk. So we gathered that it was howling with indigestion. Its wails got on the nerves of Capell and Baring, and they dropped a hundred yards behind. At last it fell asleep ; but in another hour it awoke and howled again. This time it must have been hunger, for he halted us and fed it. It seemed to choke less ; but we had not ridden far before it was wailing with indigestion.

There was a bright moon ; we rode on through the night, stopping to feed the baby, and came down into the bed of the Molopo at about ten o'clock. There was not much water in the river, and what there was was muddy ; but by good luck we struck a little spring bubbling out of the bank, and made our fire by it. As soon as it burned up, Captain Sentimental put a big handful of meal into his tin pot, and let it boil and boil. Then, when it was half boiled away, he strained the liquor from it through his handkerchief into his bottle of milk. Twice he did it, eating his supper the while ; and when he strained in the second potful he said, " There, it'll digest that all right."

The order of our watch had been fixed ; rolled in our blankets, we were drowsing over our last pipes when the doings of Captain Sentimental woke us up wide awake. With the aid of Jam, he made a very fair screen by setting up a couple of blankets on rifles ; poked the fire to a great blaze, took the baby on his knee, and began to take off its clothes. We sat up, and stared at him with the eyes of a party of children in a box at a pantomime. It was a wonderful sight ; plainly enough he had the theory of the thing, but not the practice ; he had seen it done, but had never done it ; for his fingers were all thumbs—and the way he swore at the safety-pins ! Yet it was wonderful how gently his big hands handled the baby's little soft body. He sponged him all over with hot water out of the pot, dried him, powdered him, tied him up, and

dressed him. And all the while his face was anxious and painstaking, except when he was swearing softly. The child stared at the fire, and let him turn him about with never a howl. Then he rolled him in a blanket, and began to walk up and down with him, crooning—I give you my word, crooning !

It was too much. Baring said, " Well, I'm damned ! " Capell spat viciously into the fire ; Urquhart and Montgomery buried their heads in their blankets and choked ; De Spenser, who was on guard, walked quickly away. I got up and went after him. He was leaning against a boulder, shaking.

" Wasn't I right ? Wasn't I right ? " he said. " Captain Sentimental, by all that's holy ! "

" I'm not sure you're not a blamed fool," I said, trying to work it out in my mind.

He turned quiet, and presently he said, " Well, I believe you're right. After all, some beast of a woman lost a good thing there."

We went back to the fire, and found Captain Sentimental rolled in his blanket, cuddling the sleeping child to him.

" De Spenser," he said sleepily, " if I stir, just come and shake me awake. I might overlay him."

He made but a poor night of it. Three times I awoke to find him feeding the child, or walking up and down, hushing him to sleep ; and all my two hours' watch he did not get twenty minutes' rest.

At dawn we breakfasted and rode eastwards, keeping along the hills on the southern bank of the

Molopo. All the while we kept dropping back by twos to discuss how Captain Sentimental had learned to deal with babies. The baby's appetite regulated our march : every two hours we halted while he was fed. At noon he had another wash and change in the warm sun. He took his meals now with no more than three chokes, and those not bad ones, in each ; and he wailed very little with indigestion. Capell and Montgomery grumbled continually at the delay, but out of Captain Sentimental's hearing. His nights were very bad ; and whenever we halted for our noon rest he would fall dead asleep, after washing the baby, if it would let him. But he was happy enough : his face cleared of its scowl as he tended the child ; and sometimes he would ride alone over smooth ground, looking down at him in a curious, hungry way that made us uncomfortable.

Now and again we got information from parties of niggers, or at a farm, but very little, and that vague. But at last the day came when we should be in Mafeking by night, and we were very cheerful as we rode. In the afternoon, when we were some fifteen miles away, a faint boom came over the hills from the east. At no word of command we pulled up our horses and, looking at one another, listened. We heard nothing, and were just moving on when the boom came again : we knew it for the report of a big gun. But there were no guns in Mafeking of a size to be heard at that distance. The town was besieged.

Jam was sent on a mile ahead ; De Spenser rode

half a mile behind him ; I rode half a mile out on the right flank, Montgomery on the left ; and we moved forward slowly and cautiously. We were three hours going seven miles, and all the while the booming grew louder. Just before nightfall I saw Jam and De Spenser coming back to the others with three niggers, and rode in to hear the news. The town was surrounded and being bombarded.

We burst into a debate as to what we had better do—try and sneak through the Boer lines, or move down the Free State frontier. Suddenly Captain Sentimental cried, “ Milk ! I must have milk ! I used up the last in the bottle, thinking we should be in Mafeking to-night ! ” And he turned, and led us south-east.

The night fell very dark ; the moon, in its last quarter, would not rise for hours ; the black veldt sucked up the starlight. We might pass a farm within a hundred yards and never see it. We rode with our eyes and ears on the stretch, and presently the child began to wail. Little by little we rode wide of the wailing, keeping in touch by an occasional shout. For two hours we rode, and never a farm. Then we saw a fire glimmer far ahead. We drew together, and Jam and De Spenser rode on to reconnoitre. We pushed on after them ; and presently Jam came cantering back, and cried, “ Niggers, baas ! Run away from town ! ” We galloped up to the camp, and found that they had no cattle ; but, as luck would have it, there were two women with babies with them. Grumbling that it should



be suckled by a nigger woman, Captain Sentimental let the baby have his fill ; and in the morning he was very full, somewhat sick, and very happy ; he smiled once, distinctly, for the first time that we had seen. We rode away from the niggers, leaving the woman shining with pride at having been allowed to suckle a white child, and keeping well to the west of the railway, rode south for Vryburg.

We travelled slowly ; there was more need than ever to save our horses, for we might be chased. Except Captain Sentimental, we raged at the slowness ; he was absorbed in his baby, and quite happy. We came to the end of the fine weather, and rode and slept in a continuous cold rain ; the effort to keep the baby dry kept Captain Sentimental for ever wet, but he showed no sign of discomfort. Twenty miles from Vryburg we chanced on the farm of an Englishman of the name of Morris, and there we learned of Scott's suicide and the occupation of the town by the Boers. There was nothing for it but to push on to Kimberley. We took twelve hours' rest, filled up our flasks with whisky, took as much bread as we could carry, trusting to the cattle of the disloyal Dutch for meat. Captain Sentimental was made happier than ever by a small bag of oatmeal ; he said that oatmeal water would be far better to mix with the baby's milk than the maize water he had been using ; and we set out again.

We travelled more slowly than ever, mostly by night, for the country swarmed with parties of

Boers ; sometimes they were within a mile of us. We awoke one wet and chilly dawn, ten miles away from Kimberley, to find a strong investing force between us and the town. We lay where we were, in good covert, all the day ; and at night made a long circuit, and tried to get into it from the east through Free State territory. We got within four miles of it, and stirred up a Boer commando. They chased us a good twenty miles east, and, for all that we had kept our horses in good condition, we did not shake them off before an hour before dawn. Then we turned at right angles to our course, and rode slowly due south, breathing our horses. When at last we halted on the top of a kopje, our horses were done and we had had enough. We ate some food ravenously, rolled ourselves in our blankets, and went to sleep in such shelter as the boulders would give us from the pouring rain.

The sun was setting when Captain Sentimental awoke us, and we found ourselves in a bad case, out of our reckoning in an enemy's country, with very little food. In the clear air, the clearer that it had been raining, we could see the smoke of five homesteads, the nearest three miles away to the south. Captain Sentimental was strangely restless for him, and kept going to look at the baby, who was sleeping in its blanket under a boulder. It seemed best to stay where we were ; we hung our blankets in the level sunrays, and ate the very little food we had left. For an hour after sunset we smoked gloomily.

Of a sudden Captain Sentimental swore savagely, and said in an odd, shaky voice, "The child's got a touch of dysentery!"

We jumped up and crowded round him, cursing softly.

"It—it—kills them in three days—unless—they're treated," he said between his teeth; and we stopped swearing to think what to do.

De Spenser found voice first, and said that we must ride to the nearest town and find a doctor, even though it meant surrendering.

"Surrender! Not I! I should lose the child!" cried Captain Sentimental. "I don't want a doctor! I can treat him myself with medicine, and warmth, and—and eggs."

"There's no medicine nearer than a doctor, sir; and no doctor nearer than a town. We must surrender," said De Spenser.

"And lose the child? No thank you. I've brought him so far, and I'll get him through. Besides, where's there a town?" he snapped. And he turned the child on to its face, and it seemed easier.

We said nothing, and presently he said, "We will wait an hour; that won't make any difference."

We stood about, fidgeting. After a while the child broke into short bursts of wailing: not the wailing of hunger which we knew, but a different kind. We had to keep walking, kicking at the stones, and swearing.

"It's rather like a corkscrew turning inside you," said De Spenser; and he was right.

At the end of half an hour Captain Sentimental, who was bent over the child and gnawing at his fingers, said sharply, "Come along!"

We scuttled to our horses, bridled them, and were in our saddles in half a minute; it was a relief to be doing something, and he bade Jam lead us straight to the nearest homestead. We pushed on through the darkness, over the rough ground as quickly as our stumbling horses could. But we were nearly an hour going that three miles. We came to a big low building, and halted fifty yards away from it. De Spenser held the baby, Jam the horses. We crept up to within twenty yards of the house before the dogs barked. At their noise the door half opened, and a woman peered out. We dashed forward, and tumbled pell-mell into the big kitchen and living-room. An old Dutch vrouw, by the fire, and two younger ones, by the door, frowsy sluts, yelled out at our bursting in, then huddled together on the hearth, muttering, "Das Rooineks! Das Rooineks!" and stared at us with sulky, furious eyes. Then there came a howling of frightened children from one of the side rooms, and tousled heads and eyes shining with sleep at the door of it.

"You won't be harmed! Medicine! Have you any medicine?" cried Captain Sentimental, and shouted to De Spenser to bring the baby.

The old vrouw growled something in her throat, spat on the floor, and turned sullenly away. He wasted no more words, but hurried to the shelves at the end of the room and began to search them

feverishly. De Spenser brought in the baby and carried him to the fire ; we crowded round him to look at him. He blinked at the fire a moment, and then began to wail and squirm. Captain Sentimental caught up a candle and dashed into the nearest side room. We heard him rummage about ; then he came out, and hurried into the next ; out again, and into the room of the children, who yelled. Then he shouted himself, and came out carrying a large bottle of castor oil.

In three minutes the baby had swallowed a teaspoonful as though he liked it. No sooner was it swallowed than Captain Sentimental undressed him and set him on his knee in the full heat of the fire, pulled a flannel shirt out of his knapsack, cut a long strip about four inches wide from all down the back of it, and called to me to bring him needle and cotton from the dilapidated workbox of the family which stood on a shelf. I brought them, and after a lot of trouble he threaded the needle, wound the strip of flannel round the baby's body, and began to sew it on. I was so afraid of his running the needle into the baby that I held my breath over some of the stitches. It was done at last, and I breathed easily. He rolled the baby in his blanket, and set him in the big arm-chair before the fire. The women watched his doings with a kind of sulky surprise ; but they didn't offer to help.

He rose with a deep sigh and began to give orders. Jam was to go down to the nigger huts, and see that none of them stole away to tell of our raid ;

two of us in turn were to ride round the house for two hours through the night. Montgomery showed the women into the children's room, made sure that the window was too small for them to escape through, and shut them in; the rest of us went foraging. Captain Sentimental put some oatmeal and water into a pot, and set it to boil. We found a joint of cold beef, bread, coffee, and eggs, and made a luxurious meal. In the middle of it Captain Sentimental strained off the oatmeal water and set it to cool. When we had finished it was cool enough. He broke three eggs, and mixed the whites of them with it. He looked at the mixture, and said, "If we can hold on here for twenty-four hours, I'll cure him all right!"

We soon made arrangements for the night, dragging the mattresses and bedding out of the empty rooms; then we went to sleep. We did sleep; but, tired as we were, we awoke every time the baby cried for food. Captain Sentimental fed him on his new mixture, a very little at a time. We awoke fresh and fit in the morning, and it was a pleasure to awake warm, with our limbs supple. Captain Sentimental further brightened our spirits by telling us that the baby was on the mend. The Kafir women-servants, coming early to the house, were amazed to find us there; we set them to clean up and get our breakfast. When we had finished, we let out the Boer women and children to have theirs. Capell, Baring, Urquhart, and Montgomery rode up into the kopjes—north, south, east, and west—to

watch the approaches to the house. The day wore pleasantly through—sunny, of course, since we had good shelter ; De Spenser and I smoked, kept an eye on the Kafirs, and played with the little Boer children. They were dirty, unkempt, shock-haired little beggars, and long getting over their fear and shyness of us. The women only stirred out of their room for meals, and stared at us always with the same sulkiness and dislike. Captain Sentimental hovered about his baby. In the afternoon he brought it out into the sun, and De Spenser was snapping his fingers at it.

“ By Jove ! ” cried Captain Sentimental. “ He crowed ! ”

“ Well,” said De Spenser, with more truth than tact, “ he squeaked.”

“ What ! ” roared Captain Sentimental. “ Here am I, wandering about Africa with the scum of the Universities ; and they haven’t even the sense to know a baby’s crow from a squeak ! ”

“ Oh, if you put it like that, he crowed,” said De Spenser ; and Captain Sentimental grunted.

It was dusk ; we had stuffed the haversacks with biltong and bread, for we might not get the chance of taking any more hospitality. A big round of roast beef smoked on the table. Baring and Montgomery had already come in ; then Urquhart galloped in from the north with the news that a party of Boers were coming straight for the homestead about four miles away. We fell upon the beef, cutting great slices, and sticking them between



hunks of bread to eat as we rode. Captain Sentimental called the old vrouw from the bedroom, and, laying a couple of sovereigns on the table, told her that that was to pay for what we had taken. She gripped on to them, and stared at him with the stupidest wonder I ever saw on human face. We mounted, and started through the quickly gathering darkness down the southward track. I came last, and we had gone a hundred yards when I heard a cry behind me. I pulled up, and in a minute or two there floundered out of the gloom one of the young vrouwen. She came up to me, thrust a little bundle into my hand, and said, "Voor de kleine." I don't know Dutch; but I knew it meant "For the child."

She turned and went back. I rode on after the others; and at the first halt we examined the bundle. It contained little flannel garments.

"It must take a deuced lot of practice to hide a decent heart under that sulkiness," growled Captain Sentimental.

"Expert's opinion," said De Spenser softly.

We rode hour after hour due south, Jam guiding us, for all the darkness, as straight as a compass. Soon a chill rain began to fall; and we cursed the luck which had given us two fine nights for that warm kitchen, and a drenching for the open air. The baby was the only dry one of the party. We slept from three till dawn; and then pressed steadily, but cautiously, on, for we knew that we were very near the frontier. At noon we caught

sight of the Orange River ; and at about five o'clock, after a long hunt for a drift, and a dangerous crossing, we were riding cheerfully on British soil. We soon struck a road, and overtook two Dutchmen driving a wagon ; they seemed surprised to see us ; and told us that we were on the road to Colesburg. The road ran up a sharp rise into a nek between two kopjes ; we came through the nek, and looked down on a long train of wagons crawling along the plain, escorted by bodies of armed horsemen.

Captain Sentimental took one look at them ; cried " Boers ! " swung his horse round ; and we galloped through the nek, and down along the kopje to the west. We had gone a mile when Captain Sentimental cried, " Here they come ! " and looking back, I saw a crowd of horsemen pouring through the nek. We were down on the level veldt ; and we put another half-mile between us before they were off the kopje side. We sat down to ride all we knew, saving our horses. They did not save theirs ; they raced ; and at the end of five miles were no more than eight hundred yards off. Some of them pulled up and fired ; the bullets came singing among us ; but no one was hit. " Open order ! " cried Captain Sentimental ; and we spread out. They fired now and again ; and once Captain Sentimental jerked into his saddle. I thought he was hit ; but he was not. Then we rode into a wood at the foot of a line of low kopjes. We halted ; waited till the first dozen Boers were within four

hundred yards; emptied three saddles; and as they galloped back, bowled over two more. They did not stop before they were two miles away; and without waiting to see what they would do, we walked our horses through the wood, slipped between two kopjes, turned south-west, and rode hell for leather across another plain. Once through another group of kopjes, we cantered gently on till it was dark. We should have put ten or twelve miles between us and our pursuers when we halted on the top of a wooded kopje.

The moment he was off his horse, Captain Sentimental slung round his water-bottle to feed the wailing, hungry baby. Then he did curse; an unlucky bullet had gone clean through it, and the food had run out.

"Quick, Jam!" he cried. "A fire! I must give it thick oatmeal water!"

A fire was the most dangerous thing possible, if our pursuers were still hunting us; but though we might pay for it with our lives, not a man said a word. We set to work to gather fuel, the tin pot was soon steaming.

Then Captain Sentimental said, "I'm taking this risk. It will take me two hours to boil enough for the night. Jam will take the rest of you three miles south, and come back to me. I'll join you in the morning—if I can. Off you go."

I sat down, opened my haversack, and took out my supper. De Spenser, Urquhart, and Baring did the same.

"Well, well," said Captain Sentimental, looking at us. "If you will—there will be more to look after the baby."

Capell and Montgomery shuffled to their horses, and rode off into the darkness. The liquor was long boiling thick enough, and the baby wailed continuously. At last he was fed. By the time enough to last the night had been boiled, we agreed that it was too late to move: either we were surrounded, or we were not. Two of us kept watch at a time; and towards morning we heard movements in the valley beneath. We lay around the top of the kopje, our eyes straining into the darkness. At last the dawn came; the darkness crept slowly down the kopje side into the valley and cleared; half a dozen cows were feeding in the bottom.

"Milk, by Jove!" cried Captain Sentimental; and dropping his rifle, he caught up the tin pot and went scrambling down the hill. He would not have done it later in the war.

The cows were tame enough; and he filled the pot. He rose up from milking, and came hurrying back as fast as he could, without spilling the milk. He had taken but a few steps, when there came a guttural cry from the facing kopje, and a dozen rifles cracked. He stumbled, dropped on his knees, set down the pot, and fell forward on his face.

We stiffened as we lay, scouring the facing kopje with our eyes. I saw a bush quiver, and fired into it very carefully. With a squeal a Boer jumped

high out of it, and fell back. A dozen rifles flashed in answer, and the bullets z-z-zipped about us. Once started, the Boers emptied their magazines. We fired at the flashes, and twice we got a yell. There came a pause, and I looked down at Captain Sentimental's body ; it had gone. I fired at once, to keep the Boers busy, and drew their fire. We shuffled back to the hollow in the middle of the crown of the hill, out of fire, and were debating how to get down to him and help him, when we heard a rustling down a donga on the left, and caught sight of him staggering painfully up.

"Get to your master and help him up, Jam!" I cried ; and we crawled forward for some more shooting. The Boers were moving down, and Urquhart got one as he crawled from one boulder to another.

Looking back, I saw Captain Sentimental, held up by Jam, stagger into the hollow, the pot of milk gripped by the rim in his teeth. The blood was trickling fast over both his hands, and his arms hung limp to his side. He sank down ; Jam took the pot from his teeth ; he muttered, "Feed the baby first !" and fainted.

Suddenly De Spenser yelled, twisted to the right, and fired hurriedly. I was just in time to see a dozen Boers bolting into the timber at the foot of our kopje.

"We shall have to chuck it !" cried De Spenser. "But we'll have a shot or two first !"

"I'll hold these gentry ! You chaps take those !"

said I; and very carefully put a bullet through what looked like a boot sticking out behind a boulder. It was a boot.

They shuffled away, and during the next ten minutes fired at least four times into the timber at the foot of our kopje. The Boers facing me moved down quicker, never firing twice from the same spot; they knew our shooting. I spent a cartridge or two without a hit.

“Der are Boers all roun’ de kopje,” yelled Jam.

The game was up, and I shouted to De Spenser that we’d better surrender. As I spoke, the top of the kopje in front was ringed with rifle-flashes; and Montgomery roared across, “Hold on, boys! There are plenty of us here!” And on his words there came another burst of firing on the left.

I cheered, scrambled out of fire, and ran to feed the baby. De Spenser was there first, and already had him on his knee. Captain Sentimental lay scowling at him. Jam was binding up his master’s arms. I went back, very disappointed, to get another shot.

There was a continuous cracking of rifles and shouting on the left and front, and suddenly the Boers bolted out of the wood at the back. That was our chance; we dropped three before they were under cover. Presently twenty or thirty of Montmorenci’s Scouts came pushing up the hill. I was begging that greedy beast De Spenser to let me finish feeding the baby. He refused.

There was no more shooting; the Boers had got

to their horses ; and presently the scouts began scouring the kopjes. They found four dead and nine wounded ; and they had taken five prisoners. We set off at once with Captain Sentimental, and it was weary work getting him to camp ; he had three wounds in the arms, and a nasty one in the shoulder. That swine De Spenser stuck to the baby all the way. A baby is not a thing you can take from anybody.

We joined Montmorenci's Scouts ; and a few days later I went to see Captain Sentimental in hospital. He was on the mend ; but he kept fidgeting about, and seemed absent-minded. Presently a nurse brought in the baby, and his eyes shone. He scowled at her as she set it face downwards, on a pillow half-way down the bed, chirping to it. The baby gazed about, and then stared seriously at the wounded man.

" Ugly little beggar, isn't he ? " said Captain Sentimental ; and he smiled quite pleasantly.

## THE CARLING CURE

THE two men facing one another across the white and gleaming table presented an uncommonly complete contrast. Halliburton, big, long-limbed, sleek, with the full-fed air of the self-indulgent, was the very type of the idle man about town. Presently his face would grow puffy and bloated, its florid complexion would fade, the nose would thicken, the chin would crease under the heavy jaw, the skin would sag into pouches under the eyes; but at the moment he was in the very ripeness of his sleek, hot-house perfection. An idler with twelve thousand a year, with no taste for sport or travel, for nearly ten years love-making had been the main pursuit of his life. In a series of intrigues, which most men would account sordid, which he fondly fancied romantic, any good in him had come to shipwreck; and with it had gone down any capacity for genuine passion he might once have enjoyed.

His host, Mr. Carling, was of a very different type. Slight, with clean-cut, small features, lean head, broad brow, arresting grey eyes, of a pallor almost ascetic, he looked the man of taste and intelligence report held him to be.



Halliburton would not have been dining with him but that, idle and self-indulgent as he was, on the pursuit of his life he could spend infinite pains. He believed himself to be in love with Elsie Browning, Mr. Carling's married daughter; and he believed her to be falling in love with him. He had therefore accepted her father's invitation to dine quietly with him, boring as such a dinner must be, with alacrity. An acquaintance with the father was likely to give him further opportunities of meeting the daughter.

But the dinner had by no means been the tiresome affair Halliburton had looked to find it. His host had neither wearied him with matters intellectual, nor, enthusiastic collector of Oriental china as he was, with talk of his hobby. He had talked to him as one man of the world to another, keeping the talk on the subject in which his guest showed himself to be chiefly interested, women. Mr. Carling had not talked much himself, indeed; but he had shown himself an uncommonly appreciative and stimulating listener. Halliburton could always talk well on that subject, and he knew it. But he had never before known himself so brilliant and illuminating. Mr. Carling's unflagging interest and pregnant suggestions had led him to surpass himself. In his self-satisfaction he felt very kindly towards the old man.

After the butler had brought in the coffee, and they had lighted their cigars, there came a break in their talk. Halliburton stretched out

his long legs with a sigh of luxurious content, for he had dined very well, and the coffee and the cigar were of the proper crowning excellence. He fell into the pleasant, musing mood such a dinner induces ; and Elsie Browning's beautiful face, faintly flushed to the tenderness in his tones, as he had seen it in the firelight the evening before, was present to his mind with a very vivid clearness. He assured himself that things were going his way.

Absorbed in his musing, he was but dimly aware that his host rose, went quietly to a cabinet on the other side of the room, opened a drawer, and took something from it. But the click of a lock roused him ; and he turned his head to see Mr. Carling draw the key of the door of the room from the key-hole and slip it into his pocket.

He started in his chair ; Mr. Carling turned quickly, and said in his gentle, precise voice, " Please sit still, or I shall shoot you."

The electric light glimmered on the barrel of a revolver. Halliburton sat still, but he sat upright.

" I have fired over a thousand shots from this revolver during the last fortnight ; and you would be surprised how accomplished in its use I have grown," said Mr. Carling, in an agreeable tone. " I could hit you anywhere. It is a really trustworthy weapon. The advertisements describe it as ' thorough-bred ' — an odd epithet to apply to a revolver, don't you think ? And if you do stir, I will shoot you in the stomach—three times.

My doctor assures me that some of the complications from such wounds produce excruciating pain."

Halliburton was now believing his ears. He stared at his host with amazed eyes. There was an undertone of grim resolve in Mr. Carling's gentle voice that chilled him; his eyes were more chilling still.

Still covering Halliburton with the revolver, Mr. Carling sat quietly down in his chair, and laid on the table a Louis Quinze snuff-box.

"It would disarrange my life very much to shoot you, as you doubtless feel, Mr. Halliburton," he continued, in the same even tones. "The action would doubtless be ascribed to homicidal mania, due to my failing faculties; and I should be put under restraint. But I am a rich man, and I have no doubt that my captivity could be made tolerable—tolerable."

"B-b-but what's it all a-b-b-bout?" stammered Halliburton.

"Ah, you find me garrulous, I see. But you must make allowances for age. We old men love to prattle, like children. None the less, I have been speaking to the point. I am trying to make it clear to you that you are going to do exactly as I tell you, or I will shoot you. Do you grasp that fact?"

The undertone of menace suddenly rose dominant and insistent.

"Yes—yes, but what's it all about?" said Halliburton huskily, with a sinking heart.

"I am coming to that," said Mr. Carling; and his tone was again careless and agreeable. "I am an old man, Mr. Halliburton; and old men have their weaknesses. They lack the robust selfishness of young men like yourself. My weakness—one of my weaknesses—is my daughter."

There came a sharp, gasping sigh from Halliburton.

Mr. Carling paused, with an air of polite interest, for him to speak. But he said nothing; his dread was crystallised by the word "daughter"; and a cold chill ran down his spine.

"For some time I have observed, with a distaste you would hardly understand, that you have been making love to my daughter," said Mr. Carling. "I have observed it with some uneasiness, too. Elsie is a charming creature; the tribute of your admiration proves it. But what with his companies and his politics, Browning is a very busy man, and he is somewhat neglectful of her. But he is a good fellow, as you know, since you are his friend. And I believe Elsie is very fond of him. Also there is the boy. But still there was the neglect; and your assiduity made me uneasy; for, as you know, you have the masterful, conquering air—not at the present moment, perhaps." He paused and considered Halliburton's white face and strained posture with a smile of quiet appreciation. "Well, I made up my mind to satisfy myself whether I had real grounds for that uneasiness; and, if I had, to remove them—to remove them."

The cold resolution with which he uttered the

last words rang very sinister in Halliburton's ears. He shivered. He had something of the feeling of a man on whom sentence of death has been pronounced.

"You have satisfied me, Mr. Halliburton, that the grounds of my uneasiness were very real indeed," said Mr. Carling; and his voice had assumed a tone of severity, the tone of a judge summing up. "Your exposition of your methods of assault was masterly in its lucidity—the exposition of a man who knows his subject thoroughly. You have convinced me, too, that you are no mere theorist, but a past master of the practice of your art; that your persistent appeal to a woman's weakness, her emotional craving for the more demonstrative, caressing form of affection, is, in nine cases out of ten, productive of considerable unhappiness to her."

Halliburton ground his teeth. A dull fury at his self-revealing folly mingled with his fear.

"Therefore I am going to remove you," said Mr. Carling.

He paused to gaze steadily into Halliburton's raging eyes, and held them. Halliburton knew well that his one chance was to spring on the old man and wrench the revolver from him. He knew that it was a good chance, that in the sudden flurry it was odds on the old man's missing him. He could not stir. It was not the revolver that held him; it was the personality behind it. His eyes fell dully to the glimmering barrel. He waited,

quivering, tortured, clammy with cold sweat, for the spurt of flame and the crack.

"However, I do not propose to shoot you out of hand, unless you insist on it," said Mr. Carling, with a return to his suave, agreeable tones. "My intention is to put the matter to the arbitrament of what is called the American duel. I do not know why it is called the American duel, since the true American duel is fought with revolvers. Perhaps a Frenchman gave it the name. The procedure, as you are doubtless aware, is that either of the combatants swallows a pill. One of the pills contains poison; the other is innocuous. Here are the two pills."

As he opened the snuff-box with his left hand and turned the pills on to the table, a gasping groan of relief burst from Halliburton. There was yet a chance of life.

"You lady-killers do not seem very brave outside your profession," said Mr. Carling, with gentle contempt. "This drug produces exactly the same symptoms as the toadstool which kills those people who eat it under the impression that it is a mushroom. You will remember that we ate mushrooms at dinner. One of us, therefore, will die of mushroom poisoning—a form of death unlikely to excite any suspicion. Which of the pills will you have? I will give you the choice."

He rolled the two pills across the table.

Halliburton stared at the two little white balls with starting eyes, striving to detect some dis-

coloration, some irregularity of shape, which might show him which contained the drug. They danced before his eyes. By a violent effort of will he steadied his gaze. He could see no difference between them; their likeness was hideous to him. He picked up the furthest from him with fumbling, trembling fingers, and rolled the other back across the table.

Mr. Carling picked it up with his left hand, put it in his mouth, and swallowed it. Halliburton tried to swallow his; but it stuck in his throat. His mouth was very dry. He snatched up a glass in which was left a mouthful of champagne, and drank it. The pill went down. He noticed that the champagne was already flat.

"The die is cast," said Mr. Carling, with gentle cheerfulness.

The two men stared at one another.

Then, in the same gentle, precise voice, with the same meticulous choice of words, Mr. Carling said, "The action of the poison begins, about ten minutes after it is taken, with violent cramp, very painful, I believe. The spasms grow more and more violent, racking, as it were, the life out of the sufferer, who eventually dies of exhaustion. I was unable to choose a less painful method of removing you, though your mere removal was all I cared about, for I wished to produce the appearance of mushroom poisoning."

"Shut up, you old devil! Can't you?" cried Halliburton violently.

"I feared you would be unable to brace yourself to die like a gentleman," said Mr. Carling, with gentle contempt.

Halliburton sat with his eyes on the tablecloth, his hands clenched, the nails driven into the palms, all his being concentrated in an effort to perceive the first working of the poison. His senses seemed stimulated to an extraordinary, morbid acuteness of perception. The ticking of the clock was a burden. It hammered on his ears. Now and again he raised his fearful eyes to its face, and then turned them on his adversary, in a feverish hope to see his face contorted with pain.

Mr. Carling was watching him with quiet interest.

Five interminable minutes ticked themselves away with irritating clamour. Every tick jarred Halliburton's nerves.

Then Mr. Carling said, "Perhaps I may tell you now that both the pills contained exactly the same amount of the drug."

A slow, deep flush spread over Halliburton's face as he stared at him with unbelieving eyes. It faded, leaving his skin a dead, lustreless white.

"You devil! You horrible old devil!" he said in a hushed, breathless voice.

"If you had called me vermin-killer, now," said Mr. Carling carelessly.

Halliburton fell back limp in his chair, and the tears welled to his eyes and rolled slowly down his cheeks. The feminine strain, the basic secret of



his success with women, had its way with him. He looked no more at the clock; through misty eyes he saw the beautiful world, so full of pleasures, slipping away from him.

Mr. Carling laughed gently, and Halliburton wondered plaintively at his inhuman callousness.

"It must seem hard to a man who holds them so lightly, to be carried off in his vigorous prime for the sake of a woman," said Mr. Carling, with gentle sympathy.

"Curse women! Curse them!" said Halliburton fervently, through his set teeth; and an access of petulant, womanish fury dried his tears.

Of a sudden the first spasm of cramp took him, and drew from him a long-drawn, whining moan of terror. Then there was a pause, then another spasm. Then cramp succeeded cramp; he writhed in spasms of pain, and fell from his chair to the floor. He battled furiously against the pangs, exacerbating them. There were details. But after a while he knew, as Mr. Carling had said, that they were racking the life out of him. He felt it ebbing. Then at last he felt that the pangs were growing less violent, and knew that they had done their work.

He lay very still, exhausted. He could feel death creeping towards the strongholds of his body. Already his hands and feet were cold and numb. Snatches of his life came back to him in swiftly moving pictures, childhood scenes, scenes from his boring school-days, love-scenes,

dinners, poker hands, more love-scenes, bridge hands, dances. He plunged into an unfathomable sorrow for himself.

Dimly, with dying eyes, he saw that Mr. Carling was standing over him. A sudden access of hatred of his murderer set the life in him flickering up. Then he was dully aware that Mr. Carling was kicking him in the ribs, and speaking in tones raised high to reach a dying man's intelligence.

"I think we've had enough of the farce," he was saying. "You're not really poisoned at all, Mr. Halliburton."

To Halliburton his words came faint from far away; they did not concern him.

Again Mr. Carling kicked him in the ribs, and said, "You're not poisoned at all, you ass!"

Halliburton's glazing eyes lost their glaze. Then Mr. Carling, stepping back to get a better length for a kick, trod on his hand; and Halliburton realised that his extremities might be cold, but they were not numb.

Mr. Carling delivered the kick, and cried with his first display of impatience, "Are you going to lie here all night? You young fellows are so inconsiderate! I want to be getting to bed!"

Halliburton began to understand; his brain was grasping slowly the incredible fact of his safety. Very feebly he raised himself on his elbow, blinking at Mr. Carling.

Mr. Carling's voice sank to its wonted gentle tones, and smiling pleasantly, he said: "We

have both had a dose, an equal dose, of phenol phthalein. I had prepared myself against it by taking three soda-mint tabloids—a simple remedy. Therefore it did not cause me the discomfort it seemed to cause you. Your contortions amazed me.”

Very painfully, very feebly, Halliburton got on to his feet, and stood holding on to the table. His eyes were still faintly incredulous. Then came the full shock of the revulsion from hopeless dread to an ecstasy of joyful relief. The tears came streaming from his eyes; and he cried like a woman, with loud, relieving sobs.

A faint compunction passed swiftly over Mr. Carling's face, leaving it wholly contemptuous. He wagged a finger at his weeping guest, and said dryly, “Ah, you're a terrible fellow—a devil of a fellow, Mr. Halliburton—a sad dog—remarkably sad.”

He paused, and surveyed the crumpled viveur with very scornful eyes. Then he added, “I think you're cured of your passion for my daughter, aren't you?”

Halliburton said nothing; he stared stupidly at him.

“Come, come, don't sulk!” said Mr. Carling sharply. “Is that how you take a joke? *I* bear no malice. Are you cured, or aren't you?”

“D-d-d-damn your daughter!” quavered Halliburton.

“I thought so—a perfect cure,” said Mr. Carling,

with a chuckle. "The Carling cure for misplaced affection. Begad, I must advertise it!"

He walked to the door, unlocked it, and threw it open.

"Well, good-night, Mr. Halliburton," he said, putting his hands in his pockets. "Thank you for a very pleasant and—er—yes—instructive evening. But I think, if I were you, I should leave London. I never could keep a joke to myself—never."

Halliburton made for the door, tottering and swaying.

"At any rate, I shall tell Elsie," said Mr. Carling. "Very likely she will be angry with me—as you have demonstrated with your incomparable lucidity, women are emotional creatures. None the less, she will laugh—heartily. She has a sense of humour." He paused and added pensively, "I think she gets it from me."

## ELIZABETH'S ROOINEK

ELIZABETH came out on the top of the kopje ; and while Kess, her one-eyed, bony steed, cropped with a possibly malignant joy the few blades of the only tuft of grass which survived on the bare, baked crown, she tilted forward the brim of her soft hat, shapeless and drab from rain and sun, and scanned anxiously the ribbon of road which ran straight across the veldt, and turned along the kopje's foot to the north. Her eyes brightened slowly ; for, far beyond the range of European sight, they marked a thickening of the haze which meant a cloud of dust, and saw that it was moving towards her.

That dust-cloud meant news—news of battle and siege, ambush and skirmish, news, perhaps, of her father fighting with Cronje. She came slowly down the kopje, holding back Kess, who was greedy for the grass at the bottom ; for, in spite of his fine show of ribs, of all his ribs, indeed, it was his custom to eat steadily for fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. At the bottom she slipped out of the saddle, loosed him, and sat down, with her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand, waiting for the dust-cloud to draw nearer.

After a little idle wonder about the news that was coming, whether the Kafirs were right in their story of a great Boer victory, her contending feelings about the war began their undying, harassing conflict. On the one hand her mother was an Englishwoman ; and, since she had always been brought up among the Boers of her father's kin, with a natural womanly contrariness Elizabeth had clung to her mother's people, proclaiming herself in and out of season, above all out of season, English and not Dutch. It was the nearer the truth and the more natural in that she had been not only her mother's pet but her intimate companion till her death six years ago. On the other hand, during those six years she had been as close a companion of her father as she had been earlier of her mother, sharing with him, as a son might have done, the life of the veldt, going with him even on far-away hunting expeditions. She loved the grave, silent man dearly ; she admired him greatly ; she had wept for the first time since her mother's death when he rode away to the war at the head of his commando of kinsfolk and neighbours. She could not wish him worsted ; and yet with a stubborn sentimentality she could not wish him victory at the expense of the English, her mother's people.

A faint creaking out on the veldt roused her from her reverie ; she brushed her hand impatiently across her eyes, thrusting away the conflict, whistled to Kess, who trotted up to her at the call, mounted

him, and cantered to meet the wagons. It proved to be but one wagon, though its wheels kept up a chorus of grinding squeaks, and its tilt and body creaked enough for a dozen ; and in it, smoking stolidly, sat Piet Stockvis and young Piet Stockvis his son, neighbours, and members of her father's commando. She greeted them, and turning Kess, walked him beside the wagon, clamouring for news. She dragged it out of them piecemeal ; they were willing enough to give it, indeed, but did not know how. Her father was well, and the war was over ; Cronje had beaten Methuen, and driven the Rooineks into the sea ; the Rooineks had been beaten at Stormberg, and driven into the sea ; Joubert had beaten Buller, and driven him into the sea ; Ladysmith had fallen ; Mafeking had fallen. For all the good news of her father, Elizabeth's heart was heavy within her.

She had walked beside them two miles, right to the kopjes, when of a sudden there rang above the squeaking and creaking a loud burst of English talk. She knew that it was English, though she did not understand the words, as was not unnatural, seeing that the speaker was coaching an eight from the tow-path of the Isis, and his language was exceedingly technical and bad.

She pulled up Kess, wondering, and saw walking, or rather staggering, behind the wagon, tied to it by a rope round his waist, a tall, slim man in a torn khaki uniform, the matted hair on his bandaged head, his face, his moustache, and stubbly beard

caked with blood, and mud, and dust, his wild eyes fixed on an imaginary crew at which he roared without ceasing. Elizabeth would have seen a Kafir in that plight with a faint annoyance, and possibly a faint pity ; the sight of an Englishman, one of her mother's people, so treated, scandalised her beyond words, outraged all her womanly ideas of the conduct of war between white nations ; and she rode to the front of the wagon in a flame of rage.

" Who's this you've got tied to your wagon ? " she cried imperiously.

" That's our Rooinek," said the elder Stockvis, his simple, stolid face breaking into an expression of gentle pride. " We found him wandering on the veldt, and we're taking him home to show to the little ones."

" Unloose him at once ! Take him into the wagon ! He's wounded ! He's very ill ! " cried Elizabeth.

" Take a cursed Rooinek into the wagon ! Not I ! " cried Stockvis, in the liveliest surprise and disgust at the suggestion.

Elizabeth protested, argued, entreated, and raged without stirring him from his stubborn resolve. At last she said firmly : " Very well, either you take him into the wagon, or you stay here."

She rode to the head of the long span of oxen, unslinging the Marlin repeating rifle from her back ; reined in Kess, and with the rifle ready on her arm, sat facing Stockvis, smiling unpleasantly.



Stockvis fumed and raged, swearing softly to his son, grasping slowly the fact that he was helpless. He dared not touch Gerrit de Ruijter's daughter ; it would mean shooting the four Kafirs with him who stood around grinning at his discomfiture. Indeed, he had no great desire to harm Elizabeth ; only he was used, in his patriarchal fashion, to having his own way, and was loth to go without it. His son growled to him to yield, and take the Rooinek into the wagon ; but that he would not do. Elizabeth smiled at his fuming, and told him what she thought of his Christian charity ; he told Elizabeth what he thought of her and her upbringing, and dwelt at length on what would happen to her if she were his daughter. At equal length Elizabeth thanked the Fates that she was not his daughter ; and all the while they rated one another, the Englishman behind the wagon coached with a noisy vigour his imaginary crew.

At last it flashed upon Stockvis that his furlough only lasted ten days, and at the same moment he remembered that he was not bent with any great seriousness on taking his captive home to show to the little ones ; and he roared, " All this fuss about a very-damned Rooinek ! Take him yourself ! And much good may he do you ! "

" Very good," said Elizabeth, throwing her rifle over her shoulder, and moving round the wagon. The Kafirs, rejoicing at the defeat of their master, ran to loose the prisoner ; with a shriek of agony the wheels turned, and the wagon moved on. As he

passed her, Stockvis hit Elizabeth hard with a misogynistic proverb of Solomon, and a text from the writings of St. Paul ; and in two minutes she was left alone with the prisoner. Without a glance at her he coached away at his eight. She looked at him with a knitted, puzzled brow, as the greatness of the task of getting him the fifteen miles daunted her ; and while with half a mind she considered how she was to do it, with the other half she tried to understand his rowing gibberish. There was nothing for it but to mount him on Kess ; and she slipped out of the saddle, and bade him get into it. He mounted readily enough ; and she was pleased to see, though she thought very little of his seat, that he could ride. With a heavy heart she started to lead Kess. She could have ridden a hundred miles and suffered little more than a pleasant lassitude from it ; but she could not remember having ever in her life walked four. Her heaviness of heart proved well founded : the ascent to the nek between two kopjes tried her muscles ; the descent jolted her ; but it was only when she came to the heavy going of the Karroo that she understood the greatness of the task she had set herself. Presently she found also that the homing instinct, so keen in her on horseback that it would bring her in a straight line across thirty miles of the veldt, was by no means so keen on foot, and that she had no chance of moving on a bee-line. Her spirit, however, was stiff with the resolution of two dogged races, and for all that her calves were aching before she had

gone a mile beyond the kopjes, and the sweat was pouring down her face, she plodded on with set teeth, her patient eyes only raised from the ground now and again to mark her course. All the while the Rooinek talked. He had given over coaching his crew, but had fallen to talk no less incomprehensible golf-gibberish. He spoke to her now and again, calling her Muriel, and reproached her bitterly for her inattention if she did not answer. Her head was in a whirl with the effort to follow his strange talk ; and the effort seemed to increase the weariness of her legs. At the end of five miles she was for the while beaten ; she helped him to dismount, and threw herself down beside him. They rested for half an hour, and then set out again. For all that her riding-boots fitted her admirably, her feet were blistered.

Suddenly her companion cried, " I've a guinea thirst on me ! Bring me some whisky and potass, Tomkins ! Bring it in a bucket ! "

She understood him, roughly ; but the nearest spruit was at least two miles ahead ; and she bade him be patient in vain. He kept crying, almost in a wail, " I'm so thirsty ! " or angrily, " Hang it all, Muriel ! You might get me a drink ! "

She gave him soothing words, and made all the haste she could, with the result that she reached the spruit and the end of her strength at the same moment. They climbed painfully down to the water : recent rain had swelled it to a fair stream : he tumbled out of the saddle, and drank like a horse. She was sure

that it was bad for his fever ; but she was too weary to stop him. She washed the dust out of her mouth and eyes ; made up her mind that the delirious Englishman did not matter, and pulling off her boots let her feet dangle in the rushing water. Then she considered what to do : she was seven miles from home, her legs would not carry her another mile, and night was not an hour off. There was nothing for it but to leave the Englishman, ride home, and return with another horse. She must chance his wandering away. No : she would not chance it ; she tied him to a tree.

In a trice she was in the saddle ; Kess, assured that he was galloping towards mealies, stretched himself out ; and in less than half an hour she reached Vrengderijk, her father's homestead. In a few minutes she rode out of it on a fresh horse, leading another, and three long-legged Kafirs came pelting after her at their amazing speed. She galloped hard till the sudden night fell ; and then through the deepest darkness of the night, the hour after sunset when the black veldt veritably soaks up all the starlight, she rode very warily, letting the horses smell their way past the ant-hills which are so much more dangerous than any rabbit-hole. Now and again she cried back a long ringing cry ; and after a while the panting Kafirs came up. The darkness was nothing to them : in less than an hour they brought her to the spruit ; and they had not moved down it a quarter of a mile, when they heard the Rooinek singing " John Peel " cheerily. She

sent the Kafirs down to bring him up ; and in an hour she had him safe at Vrengderijk.

For the next ten days she fought an untiring battle against his fever : a bullet had ploughed a neat furrow along the side of his skull a full sixth of an inch deep. Day and night she nursed him, aided only by two stupid Kafir women, who watched him during her brief snatches of sleep. And when on the tenth day his fever left him, Elizabeth cried a little with joy and relief.

He was quick recovering from his weakness ; but during the first days of it Elizabeth hung over him as a mother over her child. She felt, indeed, that he belonged to her ; and in truth she had snatched him from his enemies, and by the most painful, prolonged efforts had dragged him back from more than half-way down the path to death. This illusion of maternity was strengthened by the fact that the Mauser bullet, which had furrowed his skull, had dashed more than twenty years out of his life. His first utterances were those of a child of seven, his chief emotion was the vivid, changing curiosity of a child among strange surroundings. When he came to his senses, Elizabeth's first question—and she held her breath when she asked it—was, “ Who is Muriel ? ”

“ I don't know,” he said, after thinking a little while. “ I never heard of him.”

Elizabeth's gasp of relief was almost a groan. Then she drew from him a child's account of himself. His name was Antony Arbuthnot. He lived in a

house in a park with papa and mamma and sissy. He had a pony called Taffy, a dog called Gyp, and four rabbits. He did not know the name of the house. His papa was called Antony, his mother Hetty. Every fresh gap in his memory warmed Elizabeth's heart with a fresh joy : it seemed to make him more her own.

She set herself to teach him with a mother's zest ; and out of a curious jealousy of his past she taught him for the most part Dutch. He was quick to learn ; with the ignorance of a child he had a full-grown brain. His memory worked in strange ways : he did not know the use of a rifle, but when he had seen it fired, he showed himself a good shot. The first time a horse was brought round for him to ride he was frightened of it, and clutched Elizabeth for all the world like a terrified child ; but no sooner had she coaxed him into the saddle than his fear vanished and he showed himself an excellent rider, for all his English seat which she so despised. He began very soon to ride with her about the business of the farm, seeing to the proper grazing of the sheep and cattle and horses, the cultivation of the mealies, the plucking of the ostriches. Sometimes he would seem to grow aware of the gaps in his memory ; and of himself, assuredly at no prompting of hers, would strive painfully to fill them. He paid always for the attempts in racking headaches. In a few months from his recovery from his wound his mind had grown to man's estate.

Then they fell in love, with such a love as might

have brightened Eden before the fall. Their passion was the natural fusion of two tender, ardent natures, quickened neither by vanity, jealousy, nor the desire for mastery. Elizabeth had grown up as innocent as Eve, for since her mother's death she had enjoyed the companionship of none of her own sex ; and she was not the girl to let the Kafir women talk to her of any other than household affairs. Her cousins of Weltevreden and the Schommels of Rusthof, the only near farms, were all men or boys, and her father had discouraged them from hanging about her, as they were ready enough to do, for he was resolved to keep his daughter as long as he could. She had then scarcely dreamed of love ; and marriage, the fixed fate of all women in that patriarchal land, seemed to her but a far-away thing. And Antony, owing to the happy loss of twenty years of his life, could have walked an equal with the sinless Adam. Its very vagueness probably deepened their passion. Elizabeth was dimly aware that it was love that troubled her, but always she thrust away a clearer knowledge in an inexplicable faint fear born of some elemental instinct. Antony lived in a bewilderment that was half a delight. Their days were pleasant enough : there was much to do and to talk about. Their trouble came on them in the evenings, when they sat on the broad verandah, looking over the dark veldt. Their talk of the doings of the day would die down, and they would sit in rich silences filled with half-seen visions, broken by rare murmurs. Either was happy in the



sense of the other's nearness ; the eyes of either wandered always from the veldt and the stars to the other's obscure face, but both were oppressed by the desire which sometimes grew an aching, to unburden their loaded hearts of feelings utterly beyond their power to express.

There is no knowing how Antony was inspired to kiss her ; it may be that some memory of kissing his mother in his childhood taught him ; it may be that some strong desire for the touch of his lips, deep down below knowledge in Elizabeth's heart, infected him ; it may have been a sudden whisper of nature herself. But one night after happy, troubled hours on the verandah, as they rose to go to bed, in the darkness she stumbled against him. On the instant he threw a clumsy, trembling arm round her, and touched her cheek clumsily with his lips. For a breath she leaned against him, inert and quivering, then without a word she broke away, ran to her room, and threw herself on the bed, sobbing in a tumult of joy, amazement, and fear. He dropped back into his chair in a bewildered trouble hardly less than hers.

When they met next morning, they were indeed ill at ease. Neither could meet the other's eye ; Elizabeth's face was a flame of blushes, and Antony's tan was deepened to a brick-red. Their words halted on their tongues, and died away. Their uneasiness with one another lasted through the day, but as they came riding home at sunset, their eyes were shining, Antony's very brightly, Elizabeth's



with a lesser light, at the thought of the coming hours on the verandah. But even there, in the heartening darkness, they were ill at ease for a while. Then Antony's courage came to him, he drew his chair to hers, and put his arm round her, and kissed her again. Elizabeth trembled, but she did not shrink from his lips, and he lifted her on to his knee, and kissed her again and again. Presently they were babbling like children over their wonderful discovery; and the feelings of their hearts found at last something of an expression. The next day they rode through a new world stamped afresh in the mint of its maker, and that night Elizabeth prayed that Antony might never remember his past, or Muriel.

For a few days they lived in this golden world, mapping out a golden future when Gerrit de Ruijter should come back from the war, and they should marry. At times the dread of Antony's remembering a past that would tear him from her, would chill for a breath Elizabeth's glow; but on Antony all skies smiled. No faint distant thunder of the war marred their serenity, for Elizabeth rode no more for news to the track of the world.

Then the world found them out. One day as they were driving a herd of sheep to fresh pasturage, they saw a horseman riding towards them across the veldt, and as he came up to them Elizabeth recognised in the squat, square-faced, pig-eyed boy of fourteen, who belaboured cruelly his jaded mare, Frits the youngest of the Schommels.

He reined up twenty yards from them, looked them over with an impudent stare, and said with a malicious laugh, "So that's your Rooinek, Betje! You won't have him long. We're tired of your disgracing the countryside, riding about with a cursed Englander, and to-morrow we're coming, I, and father, and Hans, and all of us to hang him. And Hans is going to marry you. He'll sjambok your cursed English notions out of you, he says he will!"

Elizabeth was white with anger and sudden fear, but she cried fiercely enough, "Schommels have interfered with the de Ruijters before now, and it was the Schommels who were hanged!"

"Times are changed, Betje!" cried the boy with another laugh. "You haven't heard the news; Cronje is captured, and your father and your cousins are prisoners. Hans is going to marry you—after we've hanged that cursed Rooinek—whether you like it or not; and Vrengderijk will some day belong to the Schommels. We've wanted it long enough."

Then Elizabeth's face frightened him, he swung round his mare, and rode for all he was worth. She was in two minds whether to ride after him and thrash him; indeed, she sent Kess a few strides after him, then pulled up, and turned him homewards.

She rode home with her head high, but with fear knocking at her heart. The Schommels were the black sheep of the countryside. Their long record

of atrocious brutalities to the natives, their slaves, or to the tribes who had once lived near them, appalled even their neighbours, tolerant as they were in such matters. What was worse they were incurable horse-thieves and cattle-thieves, crimes unforgivable in that pastoral land ; and no decade during the last fifty years had passed undistinguished by the hanging of Schommels by their goaded neighbours. She knew them to be as good as their threats, and knew very well that she must die, sooner than fall into their hands.

Antony listened with a very grave face as she told him of their danger ; but when she had done, he only said with the cheery air of an older man, " It was a good thing that that boy must brag of what they were going to do. We will fight them." And for the first time Elizabeth knew that he was stronger than she, and the knowledge warmed her heart.

As soon as they reached home, they set about turning the house into a fort, no very difficult matter, for the Bechuana border was not far away, and it had been built in the days of many raids. Antony's cheerfulness, his boyish joy at the prospect of a fight, kept Elizabeth's courage high. He helped with the defences ; and it was on his suggestion that she dispatched a Kafir to Weltevreden with a letter asking help, on the chance that one or more of her cousins might be home on furlough, looking after the farm. Later three more Kafirs followed him, driving thither the best of the cattle and the

horses. But, when all their measures had been taken, in the reaction from the bustle Elizabeth's heart began to sink. She and Antony supped in the big kitchen, and he saw to it that she made a good supper. They talked for a while after it of her father and cousins, prisoners of the English; their fate touched her but little, Antony filled all her mind. Soon, seeing how weary her forebodings had made her, he sent her to bed, and as she bade him good-night, she clung to him as though she would never let him go.

They were about betimes, looking to the defences and instructing the defenders. They armed seven Kafirs with old weapons, Enfields, Sniders and the like. There was little likelihood of their hitting anything, but they made a show of strength, and their guns would make a noise. They relied on his Martini and her Marlin. After daybreak Elizabeth kept an eye towards Weltevreden, but no succouring hooves stirred the dust. An hour after dawn they saw a dust-cloud on the Rusthof side. For a while it drew near very slowly, then of a sudden it quickened, and at a mile away a band of horsemen burst from it, and rode hell for leather for the house. In three minutes the Schommels and their Kafirs galloped whooping into the garden, and pulled up before the door.

Their whooping ceased suddenly at the aspect of the house. They had looked to surprise it, for Frits had far too accurate a knowledge of the temper of his family to tell them of his warning indiscretion.

But Vrengderijk with its closed door and heavily shuttered windows showed no fluttered air. They drew together muttering their wonder.

Antony and Elizabeth were looking down on the frowsy, unkempt, pig-eyed crew from an upper window, and he was asking eagerly which was Hans. "The man on the right of the old man," said Elizabeth, and threw back the shutter.

At the sight of her the Schommels cried out with one voice, and Hans, their humorist, sent them into hoarse bellows of laughter by roaring, "Ach ! My beautiful bride ! "

Elizabeth waited till the din died down ; then she said : " What do you want ? "

" We've come for that very-damned Rooinek of yours," said old Schommel, a blear-eyed old rogue with the brutal face of a buffalo bull.

" Well, you won't have him," said Elizabeth quietly.

A sudden sense of unlooked-for difficulties suffused the wits of the old man. He swore savagely, and yelled, " Open the door, you jade ! Open at once, or it'll be the worse for you ! "

" Open the door, or you'll taste my sjambok before we're married as well as after ! " roared Hans.

Elizabeth's clear laugh cut like a whip-lash. One cried to burst in the door, another to shoot the jade, another to shoot the Rooinek ; then all suggestions were drowned in a storm of cursing. In the midst of the uproar the ingenious Frits slipped off his horse, and screened by his excited

family, fired at Antony. The bullet ripped a piece out of his tunic. On the instant he fired back, and smashed Hans' right arm just below the shoulder, as Elizabeth slammed to the shutter. The Schommel Kafirs, headed by old Schommel, bolted for the trees. His slower offspring were staring at Hans writhing and shrieking on the ground, when four horsemen came quietly but swiftly round the corner of the house, and a stern voice roared, " Drop those rifles ! "

The slow Schommels swung round to find Gerrit de Ruijter and his three nephews from Weltevreden looking at them down their rifle-barrels ; they had acted on inaccurate information. Their mouths opened slowly ; then with one grunt they let their rifles fall. There came a curse from old Schommel among the trees, and in a breath he was clattering over the veldt, his Kafirs after him.

Elizabeth and Antony ran down and unbarred the door. The Kafirs ran out and pulled the young Schommels off their horses ; and she had her arms round her father's neck, and was kissing him. While the Kafirs bound the Schommels, they went into the house, all talking together. Gerrit listened to Elizabeth's story with a very angry face. His nephews, with the impetuous generosity of youth, were for hanging the Schommels then and there ; but presently they agreed that they had better breakfast first, and occupy their cooler hour of digestion dealing with them. It was a pleasant meal. The returned warriors had their fights to tell of.

They had left Delarey's force after his failure to relieve Cronje; they seemed far more incensed against the Transvaalers and the Hollanders than against the English, and declared that they had come back to abide peacefully on their farms, weary of playing the catspaw to leaders who had everything to get out of the fire. They heard with simple wonder Elizabeth's story of Antony and his loss of memory. Her father treated her foundling with a kindly courtesy; only Dirk de Ruijter, who had always seen himself her natural husband, grew a little sullen when he saw how her eyes rested on the stranger.

Humanised by the abundant breakfast, they were more inclined to leniency with the Schommels. They were tied up one by one, and a stout Kafir gave them fifty lashes apiece with a sjambok. Frits, in consideration of his attempt to murder, enjoyed an equal punishment with his brothers. Then, escorting the wounded Hans, mounted on Frits's old mare, they started on foot for Rusthof, a sore, dejected band, bearing word to their father that Gerrit de Ruijter would hunt him down as soon as he had the leisure. Their rifles and the other horses were confiscated.

In the afternoon his nephews rode away home, and Gerrit and Elizabeth rode round the farm, for he was eager to learn how it had fared during his absence. As they came back she told him of her love for Antony. He heard her gravely, and said that there was no reason for haste, that he must



consider the matter ; but she had made it clear to him that her love and her happiness were one. Her confession distressed him, for he had looked to have her to himself for some years yet. Again, the notion of her marrying an Englishman was strange and discomfiting to him, since he had always looked upon her as sure to marry her cousin Dirk. Seeing her with this foreign lover, it is not to be wondered at that he felt some of the feelings of Lambro. For days, however, he said nothing, but watched Antony and the girl carefully ; and little by little his repugnance to their marrying began to wear away. He was growing to like Antony : his simplicity was after his own heart, and his cheerfulness, his boyish jokes, were as pleasant as they were unfamiliar to him. He found that he would make in time a very shrewd farmer. He was beginning to feel that if he had had a son, he would have liked him such a one as Antony. He grew sure that he might trust him with Elizabeth's happiness, and presently he began to see that by securing her happiness he would be securing his own. He had taken it as a matter of course that she would one day marry his nephew Dirk ; it had seemed the best that could be done for her, but he had sore doubts of the result. Dirk was a good enough fellow, but pig-headed, and gifted with a great sense of his own importance, qualities which would accord ill with Elizabeth's spirit. Antony showed no weakness of will, but he showed a far better temper. Again, if she married Antony,



he would not lose her ; they would naturally live at Vrengderijk. At last he made up his mind that they should marry.

At first Elizabeth had watched him anxiously ; but little by little she had grown at her ease, and again she gave her heart full play. After a while it was curious how little of a restraint that grave and silent man became upon their love-making. On the verandah in the evening they babbled their childish lovers' talk as though he had been a hundred miles away, and not smoking thoughtfully within a few feet of them. Only Antony was very quiet taking her on to his knee, and their kisses made no sound. After all, the noiseless kisses last longer. Gerrit de Ruijter liked it. Coming of a silent, self-contained race, he had never been able to make love to his wife ; and this love-making was something of a revelation to him. He heard the dumb feeling of the swelling heart of his youth find a proper, spontaneous expression on the easier tongues of these children. As he rode about the farm, he found himself repeating their phrases with a slow smile of pleasure in them.

Then one day he said to Elizabeth :

" When are you and Antony going to get married ? "

" O-h-h. I-I-don't know," she stammered with a great flush. In answer to the same question Antony said promptly : " To-morrow."

In his slow, methodical way Gerrit set about arranging matters so that the marriage must be

good, for he knew something of the difference of the marriage laws in different countries. Antony became a burgher of the Free State with very little delay; in such a matter Gerrit de Ruijter was a name to conjure with. In the distress of the country it seemed no time for a festival, and the marriage was very quiet. A Dutch pastor from Vryburg celebrated it in the parlour, and the three de Ruijters of Weltevreden were the guests and witnesses.

For two months Elizabeth and Antony enjoyed an even fuller happiness. Then one evening, as they were on their way home from an outlying pasture, and Antony was riding carelessly with his eyes on Elizabeth, his horse put its foot in a hole, came down, and threw him sprawling over its head. It was nothing of a fall, but the jar lifted the bone which had pressed on his brain and blotted out his memory. He drew himself into a sitting posture, and stared round the familiar veldt another man, a crowd of memories thronging his mind. He knew himself Sir Antony Arbuthnot of Righton Grange, that he had a wife, Muriel, and a child, Antony, in England. The panorama of the lost years unrolled swiftly before the eye of his mind; he saw his schooldays, the days at Oxford, the days at Righton, his courtship of Muriel, their marriage, the birth of their boy, his journey to South Africa to look after his mining interests, the besieging of Kimberley, his enlistment in the Town Guard, the brush with the Boers when he was scouting, the first few rifle-

shots. Then came a blank ; and then he saw himself in bed at Vrengderijk, with Elizabeth at his bedside. The events of the last five months followed clearly ; in a few seconds he had seen all his life. He turned a scared face up to the anxious Elizabeth, who was asking where he was hurt. At the sight of it she caught her breath, and cried : " You remember ! Who—who—is Muriel ? "

" I remember," he said, and rising heavily to his feet, stared across the veldt.

" Tell me—tell me ! " she gasped huskily.

" I must think," he said slowly. He caught his horse and mounted, and they rode home at a walk in silence. Now and again he looked at her terror-stricken face with pitiful eyes.

Gerrit wondered at their silence during supper and on the verandah. With Elizabeth's hand in his, Antony sat trying to think the matter out. Unwillingly he had done her the worst possible wrong. How could he right it ? Duty called him to Muriel ; duty chained him to Elizabeth. Love and desire bade him keep his secret and enjoy his happiness. Muriel was a far-away, misty figure. The memories of his old love, of his other married life, were dim. He was fond of Muriel indeed (he assured himself that he was), but he loved her no longer ; and he loved Elizabeth with all his heart. Long ago Muriel must have utterly abandoned hope and mourned him as dead. By now her grief had softened ; she had her boy, the Grange. In a year or two she would marry again and forget him ; she was of that kind.

Why should he spoil Elizabeth's life? . . . He would not. He would hold his tongue, and take the goods the Gods had given him.

And then he found that he could not ; honour, imperative honour, bade him take the harder path.

At last he made up his mind that with Elizabeth, at any rate, he would be honest. He had an infinite belief in her rightness ; she should help him decide. When they were in their bedroom, he told her.

She sat on the bed, listening to him in a dumb, miserable horror, a shivering jealousy, till he came to the end of his tale. Then she cried :

" Oh, how she must have missed you ! How she must have grieved ! "

" She is getting over it," said Antony. " I know her ; and I give you my word she is."

" No," said Elizabeth ; and she buried her face in her hands and thought awhile. Then she said drearily, " You must go back to her." Then she cried : " No, no ; it is too late ! " And Antony knew that he was bound to her by a double chain.

" Is that so ? " he said, and he began to pace the room.

Of a sudden Elizabeth burst into a storm of heavy, racking sobs. He had never before known her weep ; only once had he seen tears in her eyes, and her sobs hurt him, shook him. He sat down on the bed beside her, and held her very tightly, and kissed her, and soothed her.

Presently she said: "I can't give you up . . . now . . . if I wanted to. . . . And yet . . . and yet . . . Oh, you must go back to her! . . . You're bound to. . . . And . . . I can't bear it."

"I won't give you up!" said Antony fiercely. "Look here, my dear girl, we must be practical. After all, there's more than one world. Muriel is as much in another as if she lived in the moon. There are a summer and winter in every year; I shall spend the summer in England, the winter with you."

Elizabeth gasped and pushed him away from her. "You expect me to be content with half of you!" she cried.

"You've got the whole of me; and I'd give you all my time with all my heart! But how can I? And I have only half of you—half the year, that is. I shall hate the double life—the deceit, the concealment, the worrying possibility of the truth coming out. But we can't help ourselves."

"I will never endure it—never—never——!" cried Elizabeth fiercely; and she sobbed again.

Antony soothed her, but he did not press his suggestion then. He let her consider it. It rasped all the woman in her. But after a while the compromise began to appeal to her human tendency to take half a loaf rather than no bread. If she had had only herself to consider, she might in time have found the strength to give him up, hard as it would have gone with her; she could not make her unborn babe fatherless. They had been innocent

puppets in the hand of jesting Fate ; the jest was cruel, but as Fate pulled the strings they must dance to the end of it.

She did not, however, agree at once, and for three days they threshed and threshed the matter out. In the end his plan seemed a bad way, but the only way, out of a bad business. They explained to her father that Antony's memory had come back, and he must go to his friends in England for a while. Of Muriel they said nothing. A week later Antony rode away from Vrengderijk.

Truly the High Gods were punishing them for their great happiness. He left Elizabeth sick at the loss of him, sick with jealousy that he went to another woman, sick with the fear of how that other woman might change him. He would come back ; she trusted him wholly ; but how reluctant, her Antony no longer, he might return ! He rode away slowly, with a leaden heart. Elizabeth held his heart-strings, and every mile tightened them with a crueller pain. Time and again he turned his horse to come back to her, then set his teeth and pushed doggedly south, cursing the honour which dragged him.

Six days later, a very weary man with lack-lustre eyes, he entered Kimberley. He rode up to the hotel, and a big man on the verandah gave a great shout, crying, " Arbuthnot ! By all that's holy ! Arbuthnot ! " He came running down the steps and wrung his hand. Antony recognised, as a figure in a dream, his old friend Bromley-Carter.

"We thought you were dead!" he cried. "We thought you were dead! Where have you been?"

"I was wounded—ill—among the Boers," said Antony.

Bromley-Carter dragged him up the steps, calling for drinks, and over them Antony told the story which was to serve. As he told it he perceived, dully, that Bromley-Carter lost his joy at his return to life. His face grew uncomfortable, nervous, unhappy. He fidgeted in his chair.

"And how's my wife and the boy? Have you heard of them lately?" said Antony at the end of his story.

Bromley-Carter coughed, his big blue eyes wandered round helplessly; then he burst out, "Oh, why the devil didn't you turn up five days ago? A cable would have stopped them!"

"Stopped who?" said Antony.

Bromley-Carter hesitated, looking at him compassionately. Then he said, "I'm afraid, old chap, I've some damned unpleasant news for you. It's infernally hard lines after all you've gone through. But, of course, we all thought you were dead—we had word that you were dead—months ago; and your wife—well, she was awfully cut up—awfully—I never saw a woman so cut up—upon my soul, I never did. But—well, you see—it was months ago."

"And she's got over it," said Antony.

"Well, yes. And—er—er—she's married again—last Monday."

Antony sprang to his feet, upsetting his chair. "Look here!" he cried. "You must never tell any one you've seen me! Not a soul! Do you hear—not a soul!"

"Well, old chap, if you——"

"Promise it! Swear it!" cried Antony.

"All right," said Bromley-Carter.

"Good-bye—good-bye!" said Antony.

He wrung his friend's hand and rushed round to the back of the hotel, calling for his horse. One thought, one furious desire gripped him, to sweep the anguish out of Elizabeth's eyes.

His lazy Kafirs had not yet unsaddled the horses. He mounted, swung his horse round, jammed in the spurs, and tore at a furious gallop down the street. His Kafirs opened their mouths, stared after him, and then followed.

Bromley-Carter gazed after them till the dust-cloud hid them; then, shaking his head pitifully, he said, "Poor chap—poor chap—gone to be alone with his grief on the veldt. How fond of her he must have been!"



## THE INFERNAL MACHINE

THE room was all a hard glitter, for electric lights had been set in the old glass chandelier, and its hundreds of lustres flung the white rays backwards and forwards from one to another in a dazzling interchange, and multiplied them to thousands. So hard was the glitter that the late device of civilisation produced an effect of crude barbarism. Its staring brilliance even struck a dull gleam out of the tarnished gilt of the old French furniture.

Prince Paul Urusoff stood very still before the blazing fire, a brilliant figure in his general's uniform, its gold lace, the orders on his breast, the scabbard of his sword, all agleam in the white glare. In the perfect balance of hard muscles and calm nerves he stirred no more than a statue. But his grey eyes, as they followed the movements of the servant putting the last touches to the supper-table, were dancing with something of the joyful expectancy of a mischievous schoolboy ; and now and again a slow smile broke the grim lines of his face.

The servant turned from the table, and said, " All is ready, Highness."

" You know what you have to do ? " said Prince Urusoff.

" Yes, Highness," said the man, and went quietly out of the room.

Prince Urusoff stood smiling, and presently the door opened and Constantin Urusoff came in. He blinked in the glare as he saluted his father, came to his side, and stood looking down into the fire, silent, frowning in an uneasy perplexity, with troubled eyes. Prince Urusoff turned a little and watched him.

They were very plainly father and son ; their grey eyes were alike, the curve of the brows above them, their straight noses, their firm, square chins, the line of their lips, their hands, their lean heads, their slim, muscular figures—uncommonly alike. Constantin, under the hammering of responsibility, might even come to look as grim as his father.

He stared into the fire awhile, then gave himself a little shake, and said, " Did you dine at the palace ? "

" Yes ; and they gave me dry champagne. I hate it—English muck," said his father.

" They should know better than that," said Constantin.

" Know better ? They know nothing nowadays," growled Prince Urusoff. " Where's Elizabeth ? "

" Colonel Svalon is bringing her from the Opera."

" Svalon ? It's always Svalon ; they're never

apart. I can't understand why you don't find some way of stopping it," said Prince Urusoff, frowning.

"I don't interfere. It would do no good. Elizabeth would be hurt. Besides, I want nothing she does not give freely—nothing."

"But it makes you unhappy."

Constantin shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't understand it—to be unhappy without making a fight for it. I suppose it is modern," said Prince Urusoff slowly. "Besides, women are not won like that. When I was young it was different. I—I should certainly have challenged Svalon."

"If I killed Svalon, it would profit me no more with Elizabeth than if Svalon killed me. She would have a horror of me. She's the gentlest creature."

"A woman's gentleness is very much a surface quality—where a man is concerned. Besides, so gentle—and always with Svalon?" said Prince Urusoff, and his eyebrows rose.

"Yes, it's strange that he should attract her so. It's a fascination. She thinks of nothing else; she talks of nothing else—an absolute fascination."

"Well, he has cast a kind of spell on her—a passing spell. Those noisy, energetic fellows often do—on delicate creatures like Elizabeth."

"No; it's the fascination of the hero. Svalon has done great things," said Constantin with frowning thoughtfulness.

"As for that, heroism is a mere accident, a

matter of getting your chance. It might happen to anybody. The chances don't always come to the bravest men. I have seen war," said Prince Urusoff.

"Well, the chances came to Svalon; and he took them. And Elizabeth admires him—passionately."

"Admires him? Yes; but no more. There's no need to be downhearted about that. The spell will pass, I tell you. You have had months' start of Svalon with Elizabeth; and she does not easily change," said Prince Urusoff.

"Not easily; but——" said Constantin, and he shrugged his shoulders with an air of bitter resignation. "After all, the important thing is that she should be happy."

"The important thing is that she should be happy with you. And—well, we shall see. I think we shall see," said Prince Urusoff; and again his eyes were dancing with mischief, and the smile broke the grim lines of his face.

They were silent, and Constantin's troubled eyes stared into the fire.

There was a murmur; the door opened; the servant announced the Countess Zakomelsky and Colonel Svalon; and Elizabeth came into the room, blinking in its glare.

Her blue eyes were shining; the clear skin of her rather pale cheeks was flushed; one after another, quickly, smiles wreathed her sensitive lips. She looked a supremely happy child. The staring white light robbed her beauty of some of its colour, and deepened her air of fragility. Black-

eyed, black-haired, high-coloured, Colonel Svalon followed her into the room with a gait springy almost to jerkiness. His high cheek-bones and the upward slant of the eye-slits showed a strong strain of Tartar blood in him ; he looked a man of coarser, and even harder, grain than the two Urusoffs.

Prince Urusoff's grim face relaxed in an indulgent smile at the sight of Elizabeth, and he bent to kiss her hand with an air almost of devotion.

Elizabeth held out both her hands to Constantin, and as he took them she said in her clear, childlike voice, " Colonel Svalon has just told me another story—a splendid story."

" He is a lucky man to have so many to tell," said Prince Urusoff, as the three men saluted one another.

" There is no satisfying the Countess," said Colonel Svalon in a rather rough, harsh voice. " As soon as I have finished one, she asks for another and then another, and always stories of war. I tell you, if all Russian women were as keen about war, we should be a good deal quicker conquering the world. And Japan ? There would be no Japan. It was hard work collecting those stories ; but it was worth while, since the Countess is so eager to hear them."

" It was more than hard work. It was terrible—magnificently terrible," said Elizabeth ; and there was a touch of awe in her admiring tone. " Tell them the story, Colonel Svalon."

He told the story, an affair of outposts, and he told it well. The quick, jerky movements of his body, his sparkling little eyes unceasingly darting from one to the other, his restless hands gave the impression of an overflowing, irrepressible energy.

When he came to the end of the story, the servant said, "Supper is served, Highness."

They sat down at the table, Elizabeth facing the Prince, Constantin facing Svalon. The talk was easy, unchecked, unbroken by pauses. Constantin did not smile often, not even at Elizabeth; but he took a sufficient share in it. Elizabeth seemed to have no ears for any one but Svalon. She listened to him with shining eyes, parted lips, and flushed cheeks, bent all the time a little towards him. Her frail beauty seemed to draw warmth and colour from his abounding vigour. She was like a flower turning to the sun.

Under the stimulus of her eyes and the champagne he talked more and louder, telling them what he had done and what he would do—or rather, telling Elizabeth; more and more he addressed himself to Elizabeth. There was nothing of the boaster about him. It was the talk of a man who had done things, and, sure of himself, was resolved, steadfastly, to do greater things. But it was always the unrelieved egotist who spoke. Svalon had worked and fought for Svalon, and he was going to work and fight for Svalon, and for no one and nothing else. He sneered at the Panslavistic dream; the conquest of Persia, himself the conqueror, was his goal.

The East was the proper field for the exercise of his peculiar talents.

But all the while that he was dominating the party by his violent vigour, he showed an uncommon, quick-witted address. He deferred to Prince Urusoff. Elizabeth had but to move her lips, and he was all earnest attention; he seemed to weigh their words carefully before he agreed with them. He was civil to Constantin, but with a reserve. Two or three times, when his eyes rested on him, there was a question in them; they seemed to weigh him as an adversary.

Prince Urusoff flattered him, applauding his designs, urging him to develop further his plans. He seemed resolved that his guest should display his powers to the full. Presently they were again talking about Persia.

"It's dreadful to think that Colonel Svalon is going away to the end of the world again," said Elizabeth.

"You could hardly expect him to stay in Petersburg. It's no place for heroes," said Prince Urusoff. "When do you go, Colonel?"

"Not yet," said Svalon. "There was a hitch at the last moment. Nicky Miloush must needs have a finger in the pie."

"It is hampering," said Prince Urusoff. "But never mind, once you're there, Persia's a long way off, and no one will take any interest in it. There'll be no newspaper correspondents in Persia to frighten people."

"It is a long way off," said Elizabeth with a faint sigh.

"Colonel Svalon will bring you back many new stories from Persia," said Prince Urusoff.

"Yes, I will—larger stories. I shall be Governor in six—in five years. Then I will build that railway—a real railway—with double lines—not like that rotten Trans-Siberian. Persia shall pay for it. Oh, I will bring you back stories from Persia, Countess—and from Afghanistan—and from India."

"You'll never get over those infernal mountains, Colonel," said Prince Urusoff.

"But I will—I tell you I will," said Svalon firmly. "What will it cost? Two hundred thousand men. Russia can spare them."

"But their wives and children and mothers, Colonel Svalon!" cried Elizabeth.

Svalon shrugged his shoulders. "Men must die some time," he said. "And with another half-million, I'll sweep India from end to end. I'll bring you a story from Cape Comorin, Countess."

"Cape Comorin is a long way off," said Prince Urusoff.

"I am a lucky man; things come my way," said Svalon quietly. "And once I have India in my hand, I'll get to the real thing. I'll turn my attention to Germany. It will be a tough job. But I shall have all Russia behind me—Russia mad for the world. I will throw a million seasoned men, trained in the only school, in war itself, into Germany. She will crumple up. And France—



she'll be a tougher job still. But it can be done. Russia must run to the English Channel—and beyond. I shall be grey-haired then."

He stopped, raised his glass, and drank slowly, with eyes which gazed through the walls at far-away things.

"You're a great man, Colonel Svalon," said Prince Urusoff with sincere admiration.

"He is a superman—dreaming in Empires," said Elizabeth softly; and she gazed at him with fascinated eyes.

The three men gazed at her. A slow flush gathered in Svalon's face; his restless eyes were still, devouring her, and he said slowly, "I don't know what a superman is, Countess. I'm a soldier—but I have other dreams."

They seemed to be alone together, to have forgotten the other two. There was a dull, painful anger in Constantin's eyes.

"Open another bottle of champagne; and you can leave us, Vassili," said Prince Urusoff to the servant.

They sat silent. Elizabeth was gazing down with rapt, unseeing eyes. Svalon and Constantin gazed at her. At the pop of the champagne cork all three started. Vassili put the bottle on the table and went out of the room.

Constantin and Svalon looked at one another with hostile, challenging eyes.

"A great scheme," said Prince Urusoff.

None of them seemed to hear him.

He had been sitting bent forward with his right arm on the table. He drew himself upright and in a louder voice said, "One of you is wearing a watch which ticks very loud."

"I'm not wearing a watch," said Svalon.

Constantin shook his head.

"It must be yours, Elizabeth," said Prince Urusoff.

"No ; my watches are at home," said Elizabeth.

"It's odd. I hear a ticking. Listen," said Prince Urusoff.

They were all silent.

"Yes, there is a ticking—in the corner. It comes from Marie Antoinette's cabinet," said Elizabeth.

Constantin rose, went to the cabinet, and opened its doors. There were a few pieces of bric-a-brac on the shelves, but no watch or clock. With a sudden movement he bent towards the floor, drew himself upright, and turned to them.

His face was very pale, but he said quietly, "There is nothing. Let's go to the drawing-room, father."

There was a curious tense silence for a moment. Constantin's eyes met those of Prince Urusoff, and then those of Svalon. None of the three men looked at Elizabeth.

"Come along, Elizabeth," said Prince Urusoff, rising.

"Why ? It's very pleasant——"

Then the compelling force in Prince Urusoff's

tone struck her ; her voice died down suddenly, and she rose and moved along the side of the table, a faint, groping wonder in her eyes.

With strides which were not quick but long, Svalon was at the door, opening it for her. It seemed to stick, and the handle jarred to his tug.

"There's something wrong with the lock," he said on a strident note.

"Allow me," said Prince Urusoff, letting Elizabeth's hand fall from his arm.

He turned the handle, shook it, and loosed it.

"The door's locked," he said.

"The window," said Svalon, and he went the length of the room in three strides.

"It's no use—forty feet from the ground and barred," said Prince Urusoff.

Svalon threw it open, gripped one of the bars, and shook at it. An icy wind blew into the room, and a hundred snowflakes fluttered round his head. He shut the window, and for all the icy blast, his forehead was shining.

"What—what—oh, the ticking ! It's an infernal machine ! " cried Elizabeth.

Constantin caught her hand, and said, "There's no need to be frightened. We've found it in plenty of time to get you away."

She gasped and sobbed once, and stood quiet, trembling.

Svalon came springing back to the door, and struck it hard with his fist, testing it.

"We must break out a panel," he cried.

"Kyshtim oak, forty years old, and more than two inches thick," said Prince Urusoff.

Svalon sprang to the fire-place—he seemed able to move only in leaps—snatched up the thin poker, and flung it down.

"No use; and this flimsy furniture would smash like touchwood against that door," he said, and stood still, glowering round at the rosewood chairs and couches.

Constantin ran across the room to him, seized his arm, and shook him savagely :

"Where's your resource, man? You must get Elizabeth away!" he cried hoarsely.

"Can't you see these cursed revolutionists have all the resources. This room was built for them," growled Svalon.

He stood hunched together, his brow puckered, his eyes half closed in an intense concentration.

"Can we pull up a plank and throw the damned thing out of the window?" cried Constantin.

Without a word Svalon bounded to the corner, and Constantin was nearly as quick. They dropped on their knees, wrenched up the carpet, ripping it from the nails, and dragged it back, upsetting the cabinet. The ticking rang out louder.

"New screws," said Constantin, bending over the bared planks.

They stood up, and stared round the room, seeking some makeshift tool.

"The knives!" said Svalon, leaping to the table.

He snatched up a knife, set his heel on the blade,

snapped it in half, and was back in the corner, on his knees, working away at one of the screws which held down the plank. Constantin was quick to imitate him. The thin blades chipped and bent ; not a screw moved half a turn. Prince Urusoff watched them, with an arm round Elizabeth. Svalon broke three knives and Constantin two, before they relaxed in their fruitless efforts.

They rose and looked at one another, and came back to the table. There was no longer any springiness in Svalon's gait ; he sank limply into a chair, and wrapped a napkin round his bleeding fingers. Constantin set himself as a shield between Elizabeth and the corner, looking at her with a fury of pity and horror in his eyes. She held her head high, but she was moistening her dry lips with the tip of her tongue.

In their silence the sound of the ticking came very clear.

"So—we are caught like rats in a trap," said Prince Urusoff, and he sat down.

"Like rats in a trap," snarled Svalon.

There came two gasping, strangled sobs from Elizabeth. Constantin made a step towards her. She checked her sobs by a convulsive effort, and was very still. The ticking struck very loud on their strained ears.

"It's absurd—monstrous—execrable ! Cut off like a rat in a trap—at the beginning of things !" shouted Svalon violently ; and he burst into a storm of execrations at the revolutionists.

"Howling won't mend matters," said Constantin.

Svalon was silent. Then in a fresh spasm of energy he rushed to the window, opened it, and shouted for help. The others watched him. His voice drowned the sound of the ticking. It was a relief.

Prince Urusoff said, "The window opens on to the courtyard. Not a servant will be out in it on a night like this. With that wind blowing, no one will hear you."

Svalon banged the window, and came down the room, cursing again.

"Don't make such a noise. I can't hear the ticking if you make such a noise," said Elizabeth fretfully.

"The Countess sets you an example of composure, Colonel," said Prince Urusoff.

"Curse composure!" said Svalon. But he looked at Elizabeth, and some of the savage rage faded out of his face. "God, it is hard!" he said. "At the beginning of things—the very beginning of things. And you too, Countess—to lose you too!" He threw out his hands. "Everything was coming my way—everything."

Elizabeth gazed at him with curious, searching eyes; and a faint flush warmed her pale cheeks.

He took a step towards her, and held out his arms. "Come, let us die together. It's all that's left—a few kisses."

Elizabeth took a step backwards:

"No, you're wrong. I'm not—I wasn't—coming to you, Colonel Svalon," she said quickly.

"This is no time for timidities. We're out of the world. You can be yourself; there will be no one to tell, eh, Highness?" said Svalon.

"There will be one to tell," said Prince Urusoff.

Svalon made another step towards her, smiling.

"Quick, we have not long—three kisses, perhaps."

A faint repugnance shone in Elizabeth's eyes, a little shiver shook her. "No," she said in a faint voice but clear. "You're wrong—quite wrong. Never, had we been living, would you have kissed me."

"I think I should," said Svalon quietly. "But what does it matter now?"

He dropped into a chair, filled a glass with champagne, drank it slowly, and then another.

The ticking rang out in the silence as jarring as a cracked bell. It hammered on their ears.

"Oh, will it be long? It's dreadful waiting," cried Elizabeth, and her voice broke in a sob.

"Poor Elizabeth! Don't be so frightened. It will be very quick. You will know nothing—feel nothing—nothing at all," said Constantin gently, and there was a poignant tenderness, an aching regret in his tone.

"But it's so dreadful, waiting," she wailed, and then softly, "Hold me, Constantin."

Constantin made a step forward, and his arms were round her. She raised her face, and their lips met.

"Oh, Elizabeth—poor Elizabeth!" he groaned.

"So that was how the land lay. I thought so," growled Svalon, and, scowling at them, he poured out another glass of champagne.

Prince Urusoff laughed softly; then he said, "I think the joke has gone far enough."

Svalon twisted on his chair and looked at him; but neither Elizabeth nor Constantin heard.

"I meant to wait till the alarum went off," said Prince Urusoff in a louder voice which caught their ears. "But it might be too great a shock to Elizabeth. The ticking is bad enough."

"Alarum? Joke? What do you mean?" said Svalon, starting up.

"Well, I wanted to test your nerves, Colonel Svalon, so I had a plank taken up and put one of those loud-ticking American clocks underneath it. It's not an infernal machine at all."

"Oh!" said Elizabeth, and she twisted herself out of Constantin's arms, and stood gasping and blushing.

"An American clock! An American clock! Well, I'll be damned!" cried Svalon; and he burst into a great shout of laughter, and then roared and roared on a lower note. The roars rang a little hysterical. Presently, he was rocking on his feet, holding his ribs, and the tears were running down his cheeks. After a while he got control of himself, checked his laughter, and gasped, "A splendid joke—stupendous."

"I merely wished to test things," said Prince Urusoff.



"But you're detestable, godpapa," said Elizabeth; and then she smiled.

"You shouldn't have done it, father! It was cruel—horrible to frighten poor Elizabeth like that," cried Constantin hotly. He was panting painfully, like a man who has run himself out in a race.

"I don't think you've any great reason to complain, Constantin," said Prince Urusoff mildly. "And I think Elizabeth will forgive me. I fancy my infernal machine—cleared the air."

"It didn't, godpapa! I never—I always——" cried Elizabeth, and she stopped short, blushing furiously.

There was a jarring click, and then the buzzing tingle of the alarum, smothered by the floor. Elizabeth clutched Constantin's arm with both hands.

Another great shout of laughter burst from Svalon.

"A glorious joke—glorious," he roared. "I have been nearly frightened to death."

## A CHANGE OF HEART

THE operation was over, and it had been successful: Bellamy Grist's new heart was beating steadily. I went to the window, called down to the reporters "Success!" and watched them dash into the temporary telegraph office on the other side of the road, to speed the glad tidings to the anxious waiting cities of the United States that a new lease of life had been granted to America's noblest son, and the golden stream of his poetry would still flow. Then I breathed long and deeply, and came back to the operating-tables. My work was done; Glaisher and Tobin were putting the final touches to it; and I had leisure to look from the massive face of Bellamy Grist, pillowed in its leonine mane of snow-white hair, to the black, chinless, browless face of Moko, the big chimpanzee, whose heart now beat in the poet's body.

As I looked, to my surprise, the chimpanzee's ears twitched.

He should have been dead half an hour. In extreme dismay I looked about for Bellamy Grist's heart, the heart which was to be embalmed and deposited in the Pantheon where should rest the relics of America's great dead. The very movement

to build the Pantheon had been set on foot by Bellamy Grist's admirers, who could not endure that his splendid heart should, after the operation, lack a fitting resting-place ; and now that idiot O'Driscoll, with his senseless love of practical joking, had sewn it up in Moko's bosom. What a fool I had been, brilliant surgeon as he was, to let him take part in the operation ! It had been his task to dissect out, with Bekker's help, Moko's heart for me.

" O'Driscoll, where's Bellamy Grist's heart ? " I said sharply.

He turned from the window from which he was watching, with Bekker, the struggle of the reporters, and said, " Sure, it's in Moko. Exchange is no robbery, Hickman, me boy. And I'm thinking, too, that it's enjoying the new, rich blood that it's pumping."

" But confound you, what about the Pantheon ? " I cried.

" It can go there later, when the monkey dies, if it's built so soon. Science needed the converse of the operation."

That was true ; and to the interests of Science everything must give way : " Very well," I said firmly. " In that case you will take charge of Moko yourself."

" I'll do that," he said.

Glaisher came across the room and shook my hand, saying, " Hickman R. Shafer, I congratulate you ; in the name of American surgery, I congratulate you. It was magnificent ! "

"Congratulate Chicago, rather," I said. "My masters Guthrie and Carrel invented the operation. I'm only their pupil, after all."

"You did it twenty minutes quicker than either Guthrie or Carrel. I've seen them," said O'Driscoll.

"That's so," said Tobin; and he and Bekker also shook hands with me, and congratulated me.

I made another examination of Bellamy Grist; and we moved him into his bedroom. Then I went downstairs to my wife Editha, Bellamy Grist's daughter. Her face lighted up at the sight of me, and she stepped hastily forward, kissed me on the brow, and said in a choked voice, "Oh, Hickman, my glorious Hickman, you have given me back a father! But more—oh, far more—you have given back to the greatest of the nations its noblest son!"

"That's so, little girl. If all goes well," I said.

"It will! I feel it will! And oh, how doubly blessed am I, to be the daughter of a genius and the wife of a genius! You will be world-famous!"

"Yes; I guess American surgery will go up one," I said.

She blinked; and I thought it was at the idiomatic phrase; but then she sighed, and said, "If only it had not been a monkey's heart—in my splendid father."

I have always recognised that she is the high-souled, ethereal daughter of a poet, and I said soothingly, "Well, it was a choice of evils. And after all a heart is only a muscle; it's not like a brain; it can't do him any harm."

"No, no! Of course not. Still, I can't help feeling it. If only it could have been the heart of some brave, simple, young Westerner!" she said, clasping her hands.

"No young Westerner applied. And if one had, the law might have kicked up a fuss," I said. "But I must get back to your father."

I kissed her, and went upstairs; I was thankful that she had not spoken of her father's old heart. I wanted time to think over breaking the truth about it to her.

For some days she was busy with the sacks of congratulatory letters and telegrams brought to the house by the postal wagons, and in cutting out and pasting into large volumes the eulogiums of the Press on Bellamy Grist and myself. O'Driscoll smuggled Moko away as soon as he could be moved; and she was not even aware that the chimpanzee was alive. O'Driscoll had bidden me good-bye, and taken a few steps towards the depot, when he turned and said:

"Suppose the heart *is* the seat of the emotions, after all, Hickman, me boy?"

"Not on your life!" I said.

Bellamy Grist made a wonderful recovery. The powerful heart of Moko drove the blood in full flood through his veins, and every other organ took on a new lease of life. The years seemed to fall off him; and I had the satisfaction of having given to my country probably a score more years of her noblest son's activity. The Press took the closest,

warmest interest in his recovery ; and his first egg, and even more his first steak, received an extraordinary meed of recognition.

His recovery was helped considerably by his excellent spirits ; he was frequently the prey of fits of childlike glee. At first this startled us, since, as every one knows, before the operation, a great seriousness and an all-embracing earnestness had been the keynotes of Bellamy Grist's character, no less than of his work. I soon grew used to the glee ; but Editha did not. She found it hard to adjust herself to this change in her father, since his intense seriousness had been the quality in him she cherished most.

One day, indeed, after he had playfully tweaked off his nurse's cap, she came to me in tears, and said, " I have always known, of course, that my father has a wide humanity ; but these manifestations of its humorous side, coming so late in life, jar upon me as undignified after his strenuous past. Tell me, Hickman, do you—do you think that they are preliminary symptoms of his second childhood ? "

I assured her that I had never known an old man less senile than her father ; and I hadn't.

In other ways, too, he showed this change to youth. His favourite reading had been the serious English monthly and quarterly reviews ; now he would not look at them himself, nor let Editha read them to him. His taste was all for light literature of the humorous kind from our own magazines, or for records of tropical travel.

I came in one evening, towards the end of his convalescence, to find that one of our brightest publishers, Richard P. Blick, had been down to see him about his next volume of poems. I was somewhat vexed, for Bellamy Grist had always been somewhat ineffectual in money matters, and had always made poor bargains with his publishers. It was not likely that he had made a better one on a sick bed. I went upstairs to him and, when I had made sure that the publisher's visit had not tried him, I said, "So Blick has been down to see you about your next book."

With a grin which, on any one else's face, I should have called mischievous, he drew a cheque out of his writing-case and handed it to me: it was for \$50,000!

"Blick talked of fifteen thousand," said Bellamy Grist, and—could I believe my eyes?—he winked. Yes; Bellamy Grist winked!

A few days later he was about again, and we became fully alive to the changes in him. The renewal of his youth, it was indeed almost a renewal of his boyishness, was amazing—sometimes it was even trying. He had been of a distinctly sedentary habit before the operation, spending nearly the whole day in his study. Now he was full of a boyish restlessness, wandering continually from room to room, and spending hours roaming about the woods. Before, he had been always of a grave seriousness; now, he was vivacious; he would even sometimes josh Editha. He began to show a distressing

fondness for practical jokes. I observed other changes, too, in his tastes. Before, he had been passionately partial to pie ; indeed, I had always believed that pie was chiefly to blame for the failure of his heart. Now, he preferred fruit, and salads, and sweets. In the matter of sweets he was voracious.

We were not the only people to notice the changes in him, or, indeed, to find him trying. I observed that admirers who came by scores to listen to his golden words, no longer came from their interviews with uplifted, transfigured faces ; they looked puzzled and glum. The neighbours, too, before so proud of his dwelling in their midst, now that they sometimes suffered from his practical jokes, began to look at him uneasily. His old friends, America's greatest thinkers and *littérateurs*, after a while ceased to congratulate us on the wonderful renewal of his youth.

These changes in his character were not accompanied by any diminution of his intellectual force ; I thought myself that his intellect had grown, if anything, keener and more discerning. He was not working at his new volume with the old steady industry—I have known him in the old days write six hundred lines of poetry in an afternoon—he worked at it fitfully. He had lost interest, too, in the biography, once his pride, which Editha was writing of him. Curiously enough, I liked him far more than I had in his serious days. In spite of my being a serious scientific man myself, we were now



much closer friends. I did not, indeed, see so much of him as I had done, for I was often away from home performing the heart-transference operation in every part of the States. Indeed, my services were in such demand that there was a run on the greater Simians, the price of them had risen sixty per cent, and Rogers, the purveyor to menageries, was forced to fit out two large expeditions to Africa, to supply my patients. Our leading financiers, society women, actors, politicians, club-men, and divines were having me replace the hearts worn out by our strenuous American life.

Thus I was prevented from observing continuously the youthful changes in my father-in-law, and it was nearly five months after the operation that I became seriously uneasy about them. Then a possibility, at once so astounding and so rattling that I dismissed it at once as an idle fancy, flashed upon me. I was working in my study, and Bellamy Grist was walking up and down it with the boyish restlessness now habitual to him. I raised my eyes from my notes and observed that he wore a very absentminded air, and his lips were moving as if he were engaged in composition. Suddenly, as I looked, without any change in his musing face, plainly without any conscious effort of will, he leapt up sideways, caught the curtain rod with his right hand, came bang down on the floor bringing the snapped rod and the curtains on the top of him; and I had had a flashing, fleeting, but vivid impression of a leaping monkey. Even as he picked

himself up with a very sheepish air and rubbed his knees, I thrust the fancy from me, and assured myself that it was only his wonderful boyishness.

Of course, the impression kept recurring, but I thrust it away and refused to let it annoy me. Two days later it was strengthened indeed. I was strolling through the woods with him, when he made another of those sudden leaps, caught the lower branch of a tree, swung, gave himself a curious jerk, and dropped in an oddly foolish way on his hands and knees. He looked round with an air of strange surprise, rose, shook his leonine mane of snow-white hair on one side, looked behind him, fumbled at the back of his pants, and said, "I thought I'd got a tail. Dodgast it, Hickman! Why haven't we tails?"

I gasped. Then he laughed a forced laugh, and pretended that he had been joking. I accepted the pretence, but when I reached home I locked myself in my study and faced the situation. There was no doubt that Bellamy Grist had acquired, along with the heart, something of Moko's disposition: with him nothing could be done; but how did I stand to my patients still awaiting the operation? At first, it seemed to me that I ought to warn all of them of these new results of it. I took the list of names and dates out of the drawer, to write to them; and it pulled me up short. There were two famous divines, a great but honest lawyer, a professor of Harvard, and an insurgent senator, about whom there could be no doubt; they were

servants of the American people, doing good work ; they must be told, and choose for themselves. On the other hand there were two Wall Street operators, the head of a great, well-watered trust, three leading politicians, and five leaders of Society in New York and Chicago. It was plain that the characters of these could not but benefit by the admixture of some natural monkey, and I resolved, in their case, to preserve a beneficial silence, and operate.

For the next few weeks I watched Bellamy Grist closely, and now that my mind was on the right tack, I saw many signs of the influence of Moko. I came to the conclusion that the influence was merely in his sentiments and emotions ; his brain power was as strong as ever. He finished his volume of poems and dispatched it to his publisher. Editha was hurt, and I think deeply hurt, though she was too high-souled to complain, by the fact that he had not shown her a single poem in it. Before his operation she had been his constant confidante and adviser in matters poetical, and had always striven, for, like Homer, he sometimes nodded, to keep him at the highest level of grave seriousness. Also, since his recovery she had done much to keep his boyishness within bounds ; she had striven, with gentle, persistent firmness, to keep before his mind the attitudes and sentiments befitting his dignity as America's noblest son. Editha was not easily checked by ill-success ; and she was always on the watch for lapses.

A few days later I suffered another shock. I

was walking in our little town with him, when a mulatto girl passed us. He gripped my arm and cried, " Good heavens, Hickman ! What a beautiful creature ! What features ! "

It was the Simian type that appealed, and my blood ran cold. His admirers would never stand for mulattos. I turned and fairly dragged him homewards.

We had just reached home and were entering the house, when the sound of hurried footsteps made me pause and turn my head. A dapper little man with a very pale face, was opening the garden gate.

" Hello, here's Blick," said Bellamy Grist, and I caught a ring of discomfort in his tone.

The publisher skipped up to us in the hall, and without a word of greeting cried, " Mr. Grist ! What does this mean ? What *does* this mean ? "

" What does what mean ? " said Bellamy Grist.

" This book—this dreadful book ! " cried the publisher.

" What's the matter with the book ? " said Bellamy Grist cheerfully ; and he opened the door of his study, and we all went in.

" The matter ! The matter ! " cried Blick, slamming the package down on the table and beginning to strip off its wrappings. " We bought a volume of serious poetry from you ; and this is humorous ! It must be humorous ! All our readers think it's humorous ! "

" Well, if this doesn't beat the Dutch ! " said Bellamy Grist. " It's nothing of the kind. "

Blick turned over the leaves of the MS. quickly, and cried, " But—but this ' Ode to a Ripe Banana ' ! And this poem, ' The Joys of Nuts ' ! And—and—this one, ' Up a tree ' ! And this one—where is it ? here, ' Freedom '—all about freedom from—from insects ! "

" Well, what's the matter with them ? They're all right ! " said Bellamy Grist tartly.

" But we didn't want this kind of thing ! We wanted poetry—serious poetry—the—the noble sort of stuff the American market expects from you."

Bellamy Grist grinned at him, an angry grin that bared his teeth, and said, " Ah, if you'd only told me so, I'd have told you I wasn't writing any more of that trash. Why, I can't read my previous volumes ! " He snatched one out of the shelf and banged it down beside the MS. " They're all about nothing at all. But this is all right ; this is the real thing. I've always said that poetry should be the expression of genuine emotion ; and this new volume *is* the expression of genuine emotion. Take this ' Ode to a Ripe Banana ' and compare it with my ' Ode to the President.' A President is not like that, and nobody ever felt about him like that. But a ripe banana is like this, and I feel about it just like this—every healthy human being must. Besides, a ripe banana is a beautiful thing, and a proper subject for poetry ; but a President is not a beautiful thing and a proper subject for poetry. Think how fat he is. And this ' Freedom ' again—have you ever been troubled by a flea——"

"What!" screamed Blick above Grist's thunderous roar. "Are you seriously defending this dreadful verse? Have you no care for your splendid reputation—for—for the great success you have had in the great American market?"

"Oh, they're all right," said Bellamy Grist.

"They're not all right! And we won't publish this book! It won't sell! You must refund the fifty thousand dollars! We'll bring an action against you to recover it!" howled Blick.

"You make me tired," said Bellamy Grist scornfully. "Go and look at our agreement. I'll bring an action against you, if you don't publish it."

The wretched Blick wiped the sweat from his clammy brow, and walked up and down, muttering. Then he said bitterly, "Well, we've been had by America's noblest——"

"Say that again, and I'll hammer you through the wall!" roared Bellamy Grist, advancing on him briskly.

Blick curled up. "No, no, Mr. Grist! I—I—may be wrong! Perhaps I'm not a judge of poetry. It's a new break for the firm. Perhaps you're right. After all, there's the vegetarians—they're fond of reading." And he snatched up the MS., backed out of the door, and slammed it in the wrathful poet's face.

"It's a new break for me, too," said Bellamy Grist.

I did not dare tell Editha of the character of the

volume any more than I had dared tell her of the effect of Moko's heart on her father's nature. I watched him more closely, trying to observe if that effect was increasing. I fancied that in the matter of a love of mischief it was. Some of his pranks were outrageous; and I found that he was on the best of terms with all the bad boys of our little town. I believed, indeed, that he was the instigator of their bolder flights. I know that he bought a packet of screws three days before Ed. K. Whittle, president of the Amalgamated Banks, was screwed up in his house, and missed the morning train to the city.

Then came the domestic climax. One morning at breakfast Editha said, "Surely the embalmers are very long fixing up father's heart. They've had it five months."

"It ought to be getting pretty leathery," said Bellamy Grist flippantly.

"The embalmers haven't got it. They can't have it till Moko dies," I said in as matter-of-fact a tone as I could assume.

"What do you mean?" said Editha in accents of horror.

"Well, O'Driscoll replaced Moko's heart by your father's. He felt that Science needed the converse of the operation."

"But—but—my father's heart—the splendid heart of Bellamy Grist! This is desecration!" cried Editha.

A thunderous roar of laughter burst from Bellamy



Grist. He bent over the table to laugh easier, and the tears ran down his cheeks. He gasped and muttered, "Well—if—if this doesn't beat the Dutch! I—I—must see this monkey!"

Editha stared at him in amazed horror, murmured, "This is too terrible," and left the room.

At noon Bellamy Grist set off on his journey to O'Driscoll at Cleveland. Three days later he returned in the highest spirits. He told us that Moko was no longer his old bright self, but feeble and serious and very grey.

"Worn-out poets' hearts are no great shakes," he added with a chuckle. Then he said, "I've been thinking, Editha, that that biography you're writing of me should branch off at the operation and continue with Moko."

It was an unkind jest, but I fancied that Bellamy Grist was beginning to entertain a sort of contempt for his old, splendid, serious self. Editha shuddered.

Week by week his boyishness grew more trying. It seemed as if he spent all his time, except when he was writing poetry, plotting or executing wild pranks. We were relieved, though we were very anxious about how he would behave, when the Society of American *Littérateurs* invited him to help entertain a great French writer, with a view to confronting their guest with the serious, earnest American spirit in its most perfect expression, and he left us for a fortnight.

I watched the papers anxiously; but plainly he was restraining his mischievous spirit, for the event



passed off without any scandal. At the end of the fortnight he came back with the astounding intelligence that he was off to Paris. The old Bellamy Grist had always proclaimed that the true American poet must never weaken his grip on the American spirit by enervating contact with effete Europe. It was a great shock to Editha, and I expect to most of his admirers. But when she protested, he said that the Frenchman had charmed him, and convinced him that Paris was the city he was looking for. For my part, I could have shouted ; it was for the time being a solution.

After he had gone we were both happier. I was free from anxiety about his mischievous doings ; he no longer ruffled Editha's fine sensibilities. It was a rest for both of us. Then he wrote that he was going to settle down in Paris for a year or two, and asked me to manage his money and remit his income. I agreed thankfully.

But always there loomed ominously ahead the publication of his book of which I had never dared to speak to Editha. I was out when her advanced copy of it came, and when I returned I found her in tears. I tried to comfort her, but it was no use ; she said, sobbing, that her father had destroyed for ever his splendid success. For the next two days she went about the house mourning. Then came the day of the book's publication and the appearance of the reviews. When I came to breakfast I found her sitting in the midst of a heap of newspapers and reviews. To my surprise she was

flushed and smiling, and there were tears in her eyes.

"How could I have been so foolish?" she cried. "I missed the true inwardness of my father's book utterly. 'The High Thinker' says that it shows a poetic insight into the cosmic soul unsurpassed in literature. 'The Cultured American' says that he is the greatest allegorist the world has ever known. Of course, there are scoffers"—she frowned—"but they are only superficial and blind—souls in whom the mystic meaning of the universe awakes no response. My father's renewal of youth has trebled his great success."

I was a little dazed: to hear that the cultured were gluttons at Moko took me aback.

Editha tore herself away from the tributes to her father's genius; and we began breakfast. She opened some of her letters, and then I was startled by a sudden cry from her. Her face was full of horror and dismay, and she said:

"My father is married! Bellamy Grist has married a Frenchwoman! He has married *that*!" And she tossed a photograph across the table to me.

I have never seen a lady of a more Simian type.

## LADY FLAUNDEN'S THEFT

THE two women were dressed in black of a very different quality; and the woman with the baby was a widow. She wore the cheap black, but the baby's clothes did not match it; they were white clothes with black bows about them, and the stuff was fine. He was a clean and rosy, fair-haired baby, accepting everything with unwondering blue eyes, since everything alike passed understanding; but he drew his mother's attention to things of interest, the red automatic machines and the white horses drawing trucks in a siding, with a waggle of his arm, and an inarticulate, but quite comprehensible murmur on two notes, a low note and then a higher, prolonged: "Ah—eh-h-h." His mother gave him but a distracted attention; for the most part her sad eyes gazed down the vista of the railway at a vision of a South African battlefield. When at his murmur she turned her face to him, it lost its sad dreaminess, and shone with the divine passion; she almost smiled when she spoke to him.

Lady Flaunden watched the baby with eyes which never left him, eyes filled with the last covetous hunger; sometimes there gleamed in them an envy

very near a veritable hatred of his mother. Now and then she twisted her hands in a very passion of greed. Twice she made a step towards him, and checked herself, staring round a little wildly ; in the violence of her desire she actually dare not trust herself to speak to him. Lost in her unhappiness, his mother saw nothing of it.

Presently the train came in, and Lady Flaunden watched the mother climb into a third-class compartment, and bidding the wondering porter, who had opened the door of a first-class compartment for her, take in her wraps and dressing-bag into this third-class, climbed into it, and with a faint sigh of relief sat down in the corner furthest from the mother and child. The train started. The mother sat in a spiritless dejection holding the baby so that he could stand and look out of the window ; now and again, when he drew her attention to something of interest with more than usual emphasis, she roused herself to talk to him awhile, but she soon fell back into her unhappy reverie. Lady Flaunden's gaze never left the baby, and once or twice he looked at her with familiar eyes, as though he knew her quite well, and every look thrilled her.

Then she played her winning card ; she took her dressing-bag down from the rack and, opening it, revealed the shining row of silver-stoppered bottles.

The baby had turned at her movement, and at the shining sight, his eyes opened very wide, he murmured, " Ah—eh-h-h ! " and began to struggle

against his mother's arm. She looked round, saw the open dressing-bag and held him tighter.

"Ah—eh-h-h! Ah—eh-h-h!" he said; his lower lip went down, and he burst into a roar of anguished disappointment.

"Oh, let him come! Let him come!" cried Lady Flaunden eagerly.

"He will bother you," said his mother reluctantly.

"No—no," said Lady Flaunden earnestly.

His mother set him on the floor, and he toddled wildly down the carriage and tumbled up against Lady Flaunden's knee. Her hands shook so that she could scarcely lift him on to the seat beside her; he nearly dived into the bag in his eagerness to handle the bright treasures. She gave him bottle after bottle until he wallowed in bottles, clamouring his shrill joy. His mother watched him a little while, and then fell back into her unhappiness. Lady Flaunden took him on to her knee, a bottle in either hand, and he tried to explain to her, in his inarticulate fashion, the intimate connection of these shining things with the ultimate mysteries; life and education had blunted her understanding.

Presently it was time for him to be fed, and his mother took a bottle of some baby-food out of her shabby little bag, poured some into a mug, invested him with a napkin and fed him. After it he ate a sponge-cake and a banana—travelling had not spoiled his appetite. Lady Flaunden took him on her knee and gave him the banana in bites of the proper size. When, after being filled, he went to

sleep in Lady Flaunden's arms, with the freemasonry of mothers the two women began to exchange confidences. They cried over the death of Lady Flaunden's little boy whom she had lost just nineteen months before, at the exact age of the sleeping child, and who, she said again and again, was extraordinarily like him, of the same colouring, the same eyes, and the same ways. Then they cried over the death of the widow's husband, an Imperial Yeoman killed in South Africa. At last, the baby's mother was moved by Lady Flaunden's sympathy to confide to her her horrible dread of the future ; she was on her way to London to live with her people ; London did not suit the boy, and she was tortured by the fear of his pining away there. Moreover, her step-mother did not like her, and hated children ; she would be unkind to him. Lady Flaunden pressed him closer to her, and schemes of saving him began to float through her mind.

She was silent, thinking hard. Suddenly there came a grinding, grating jar, and the carriage swayed and jerked. Lady Flaunden was conscious of curling instinctively round the child to shield him, of being flung here and there ; then came a great crash and all was still. She was roused from the shock by the screams of the child, and she found herself lying, still curled round him, on the top of his mother. The carriage seemed to be on its side, and they lay in a heap across the lower windows of it. Bruised, shaken, and dazed she drew herself off the child's mother, and began hurriedly, with

trembling fingers, to feel his head and arms and legs and ribs ; none of his bones were broken, and he screamed with a reassuring vigour. She set him down and turned to his mother. She lay, deathly white, in a huddled heap. Lady Flaunden tried to lift her into an easier position ; her head hung limp on her shoulders ; she put her hand behind it and found the back of it all crushed. She wiped her hand on the cushion and thrust it into the injured woman's dress over her heart ; there was not a beat.

In the first shock of horror she was stricken with panic, and catching up the child, in a furious desire to be out of this chamber of death, she screamed again and again for help. Presently two men looked down through the windows above her head and opened the door. She thrust up the child into their hands ; and when they had set it down, they caught her wrists and began to haul her up. Using the supports of the rack as steps, she relieved them of some of her weight and was dragged out. She sank down, sobbing, beside the child ; and the two men, bidding her not give way, went on to the next compartments to haul more people out.

She soon recovered enough to start soothing the child. At the sight of some blood on his mouth her heart sank with the fear of internal injury. It was only a cut lip. The soothing him composed her, and she began to think clearly, gazing round at the scene. The train had run off the line ; the engine, wantoning in its freedom, had ploughed its way up to an elm tree and tried to butt it down.



Three carriages lay on their sides, their passengers were hobbling or crawling about on the upper sides of them ; some were still dragging people up out of the compartments. Three carriages still stood on the metals, and two others stood crookedly aslant the embankment. The passengers from these were streaming about the fallen ones. The air was filled with a mingled clamour ; the engine in a cloud of steam was sizzling shrilly ; the passengers were shouting inquiries, suggestions about getting down, and theories of the cause of the catastrophe at one another ; women were in hysterics.

It seemed to Lady Flaunden that she and the boy might have been in a desert for all the notice any one took of them, and frightened by the din he clung to her, clutching her tightly, his little body shaken by great sobs after his crying. She had but realised their loneliness, when a sudden idea sprang up in her mind, and filled it on the instant with a very rage of possession. Why should she not take the boy ? She began quickly to consider the matter and her chances of getting him. His father was dead. . . . His mother was dead. . . . No one wanted him. . . . At any rate his mother had made it plain to her that his grandfather and grandmother, who alone had a right to him, did not want him. . . . They would neglect or misuse him. . . . She wanted him. . . . Oh, how she wanted him ! . . . He was the living image of her dead child. . . . Heaven had given him to her instead of her lost darling. . . . Besides, she had a right to him, for



she had saved his life. . . . And again she could give him the proper care and love. . . . She would take him ! . . . Right or wrong, she would take him.

In this cursory and disjointed fashion she settled the moral question, and turned to the practical matter of stealing him. She looked round carefully, and under the impulse of her purpose, stealthily. The passengers were still busy with their injuries and theories of the cause of the catastrophe. She made up her mind to sever all connection between herself and the wrecked train, and she scanned the country. A couple of hundred yards from the line a high road ran parallel with it ; beyond rose a great slope of woods and fields ; up the slope ran a white footpath. The slope seemed familiar to her ; at any rate her path with the child lay over it ; somewhere on the other side was a railway other than the North-Western which would carry them to London.

She went to the edge of the carriage roof, called imperiously to an excited old gentleman, and handed the boy down to him. He was too excited to refuse, or even protest ; he held him gingerly, gasping. She lowered herself over the edge of the carriage, and getting a foothold on the rim of the lamp-hole, jumped from it to the ground and relieved him of his burden.

" This is the result of carelessness ! Gross carelessness ! " stuttered the old gentleman. " I tell you, madam, they have neglected to look after the metals ! I call it perfectly——"

"Where are we?" said Lady Flaunden, cutting him short.

"They tell me we are two miles north of King's Langley. Such wanton carelessness is quite inconceivable! I can't understand——"

She turned her back on him, and walked alongside the fallen carriages towards the end of the field. She knew now where she was; the winter before her marriage her people had been kept in town, and she had come down here twice a week to hunt. Over the slope, ten miles across country, she could strike the Metropolitan Railway at Rickmansworth and take a train to Baker Street. No one could connect her and the boy with the wrecked train, if they landed in London at Baker Street.

Whenever they passed one of the noisy, argumentative groups the baby clutched her, and nestled his face against her cheek. Every time he did it he set her heart hammering against her ribs, and hardened her in her purpose. She turned up the hedgerow towards the high road, climbed over three fences, and came into it opposite the footpath up the slope. She crossed the stile, and began to mount the slope quickly, casting timorous glances behind her to see if she were followed. Once she thought that she saw people pointing at her from the wrecked train. She set her teeth, hugged the boy to her, and pressed on the quicker. She could not feel her bruises for the joy of having him.

She walked for nearly an hour; then she had to stop. A baby of nineteen months is no light weight,

and for all that she was strong and in good condition, she had been shaken by the accident to the train, and her arms and legs and back were aching from her burden. She climbed over a stile into a meadow, far over the brow of the slope, set him down, threw herself down beside him, nuzzled him, laughed over him, and cried over him. He took her tenderness in very good part, and made no complaint ; indeed, when at last she lay still, he clambered about her with chuckles of infinite delight. Always he looked at her with familiar eyes.

Presently he turned his attention to Nature, and made little rushes at flowers near them, invariably falling flat on the object of his desire. He had been trained to bravery ; he did not howl at a tumble, he only grunted and pulled himself up again. He knew too what to do with a flower when he had plucked it ; he sniffed at it. She watched him in an absorbed, unfathomable joy ; the intolerable hunger which had gnawed her was blunted.

She was loth to tear herself away from her delightful watching ; but at last she rose, and moved slowly down the path, letting him toddle before her, or leading him by the hand. He would go a little way with thoughtful dignity, pointing out things of interest with a wagging arm, and saying, " Ah—eh-h-h." Then he would make a wild rush at a flower, and she would save him from the ditch. She walked in a vast content, drinking in with greedy

eyes and ears his every look, movement, and murmur. For the first time since her loss the sun was really shining ; and she heard the birds singing.

The path ended in a lane running downwards between high hedges ; and on the instant, with a cry of delight, the boy sat down in the thick dust, and began to play with it. With this sport to his hand there was no keeping him on his feet, and she picked him up and carried him. The lane ran into another lane running along the bottom of a valley, and turning to the left, she plodded steadily on. At about four she came into a little village, and was very glad to rest her weary body in the parlour of the little inn. She fed the boy on warm milk and bread and butter, and it was such a delight to her that she could have wished him to go on eating and drinking for ever. The landlady came in once or twice, and called him a pretty dear and a fine child. Lady Flaunden resented her interest, but she was careful to gratify her rustic curiosity with a story of how she had brought the boy down from London to Rickmansworth to spend a day in the country, and had wandered with him hither. While she took her own tea, the boy enjoyed a splendid time with a large cat—the cat rather endured than enjoyed it. After tea she played with him a little ; then, since the landlady could not persuade the baker, who owned the only trap in the village, to drive her to Rickmansworth, she took the boy and went to him herself. There are not many men who could refuse Lady Flaunden anything in their power to

give her, if she put herself about to coax it out of them. Certainly the simple but grumpy baker was not one of them; and in twenty minutes she was being jolted along to the station. She had to wait there but a very few minutes for a train, and reached London at six.

She changed her cab in Oxford Street, that there might be no tracing her from Baker Street to Grosvenor Square, let herself into her house, and gained her room without meeting a servant, so that none of them could have told exactly at what hour she came home. But as soon as she had taken off her hat, and the boy's hat and coat, she rang for her maid, and after telling her that she had adopted the boy, a Berkshire child, that she might spread that quite inaccurate information, she ordered her to set the servants to work to bring down the cot and baby's bath from upstairs, and to send out for baby-food. The boy appeared pleased with the pretty room, and showed his approval by tearing the draping round the toilet-table, in the intervals of wagging his arm and murmuring "Ah—eh-h-h" at all the bright things on it.

Lady Flaunden prepared his food herself, and then she set about giving him his bath. In the middle of it the fancy came to her that he was her little dead baby come back to her, he was so like him, not only in his little body, but in his ways of splashing the water, of playing with the soap and the sponge, of crowing his delight; besides, never

had he looked at her as at a stranger. She thrust the fancy away from her, but it would come back. When she had fed him and rocked him to sleep, and sat watching him, she played with the fancy. Could such things be? Why could not such things be? As her baby died, this one had been born. The tearing clutch of little dead hands was loosening from her heart.

Presently she heard her husband come in and up the stairs, not three steps at a time, as he had used to come on the chance of finding their boy still awake, but slowly. He opened her door and looked in, and at the sight of the cot he started, and stared with all his eyes. She beckoned him, and coming softly he stood by the cot staring down at the sleeping child in a bewildered fascination. "Good heavens!" he said softly. "It's the boy!"

In a low voice she told him of her theft and her precautions. He listened in a dull wonder, staring at the child. When she had done, he said nothing; he only gazed and gazed. She shook his arm in a feverish impatience, and said in a husky, grasping voice, "I must have him, Dick! I must—I must! I tell you, he is mine!"

"By the Lord, you shall!" said Lord Flaunden, waking up.

The next day Lady Flaunden and the boy were on their way to Munich. Her husband stayed behind to watch events. The baby's unfortunate mother was identified by her stepmother; and when that lady found no baby awaiting her care, she was exceed-

ingly guarded in her inquiries about him. In the end she seemed to take it very easily for granted that he had fallen into charitable hands, and even seemed pleased to be rid of the responsibility. She told the railway officials that the child could not have been travelling with his mother. Lord Flaunden contrived to see her, a thin-lipped, narrow-faced, small-eyed woman; and the sight of her face sent him to Munich justified, in his own eyes, in keeping the child out of her clutches. The boy, with a waggling arm and his murmur of "Ah—eh-h-h!" points out to his new parents things of interest in the European capitals. Soon he will have grown out of the recognition of any one who knew him in England. His new parents are devoted to him; it is wonderful, almost past believing, how he has filled the gap in their lives; possibly it is the likeness. Lady Flaunden's feelings about him are curious. Often she tells herself that he is her dead baby come back to her; often she believes it.

## THE RAISING OF CRISSINGHAM

CRISSINGHAM rose from the hot bed with a groan. He could not even doze, for his body was in a dry, feverish heat, and an irritating, nervous twitching disturbed him continuously. His eye fell forlornly on the books he had so often read, and he knew that he could not find in them relief, an escape from himself, for five minutes. He looked at himself in the glass, and turned away disgusted from the sight of his haggard face. His sunken eyes were bloodshot, and the drooping moustache showed his lips cracked and livid through its ragged hairs. He cursed himself with a scholarly preciseness, in well-chosen words, for having got drunk the night before. The imprecation had grown a daily practice with him, and stepping out to the ice-chest in the little verandah, began mixing involuntarily a gin cocktail. As he swizzled it, a little of the gloom faded out of his face. He drank it, and came back into the room, flung back impatiently the jalousies, and gazed out of the window.

An unbearable brazen sun, in the vault of an unbearable brazen heaven ; an arsenic-green expanse of sloping cane-fields, broken here by a dun



cabbage-palm, here by a staring white boiling-house, here by a drab mahogany clump, broken with a rareness that but accentuated its monotony ; a shimmer of heat that danced for a foot or two above the criss-cross, jagged cane-tops, and sent his smitten eyes skimming swiftly over their expanse in search of something to rest on and be soothed, only to fall plump on the brazen dazzle of the Atlantic, some six miles away, whereon the countless smile of ocean ran in a staring, stereotyped, brazen grin twenty miles to the far horizon, set a choking loathing seething up in him. A yearning, almost rending in its intensity, came upon him, a yearning for mists, the mists of the fen-country of his boyhood, for the heavy autumn mists of the Oxford meadows. With a growl, half groan, half oath, he slammed to the jalousies, flung himself on the bed again, and lay trying not to think.

Two years earlier everything had gone wrong with him in England ; he had lost his little money by the failure of a bank, a girl had jilted him, he had quarrelled with his family. He had tired of it all. The roving spirit had come on him, and, allured by vague visions of an indolent, tropical paradise, by vague hopes of repairing more easily his fortunes in a less crowded world, he had come out to the West Indies as second master of Glader's School. Coming in a mood of weariness and disgust, he had fallen upon a life that would ruin the most cheerful. The school work was wearisome, and the

more exhausting that it was done during the hottest hours of the tropical day. The food, unsuited to a European, neither refreshed nor nourished him. His living and sleeping room was a garret; the sun blazing down on the roof of shingles made it an oven; the heavy tropical rain, streaming in through the ill-fitting window-frames, made it a pool. His salary was but enough to keep him loaded with the debts with which he had been forced to encumber himself on his first coming: he had had to furnish his garret, and buy the necessary pony and trap. The harassing work had worn out his nerves; the lack of food had weakened his constitution; and the sordid squalor of his circumstances and surroundings, the drink that gave him a brief escape from it, had corroded his soul. In a word, he was ruined; and he lay there trying not to remember it.

He had at last fallen into a light doze, when there came a knock at the outer door. He awoke with a start that set him quivering, and growled, "Who's there?"

"It's meh," was the answer in the negro whine.

He rose, and coming to the door, found an old black woman with a letter for him.

"Mr. Gray tell meh t' carry dis script t' yeh," she said.

He took the letter, filled a tumbler with raw gin, and handed it to her. She took it with a grin, swallowed it at a draught without a wink, and held out the tumbler. He poured a little water into it,

and she drank it. Then she thanked him, with blessings. He read the letter, an invitation to dine, and bade her tell her master he would come.

He watched her go down the stone flight of steps that led up from the pasture to his verandah. His mind changed ; and he was on the point of calling her back, when the thought of the hot, lonely evening checked the words on his tongue. For three days he had spoken to no one but the negro servants, for it was holiday time. Gray was a dull old fellow, indeed, but there might be some loo ; a cocktail or two would buck him up, and even the discomfort of dining with Gray's daughter would be better than a meal in that horrible garret. He went back to his bed, and after a while fell into a broken sleep.

Awaking late in the afternoon, he whistled for his pony-boy and bade him saddle the pony, mixed himself a cocktail which steadied his hand so that he cut himself only twice in shaving, selected with some pains the one of his limp shirts hammered least ragged by his washer, and, when he had finished dressing, mixed and drank another cocktail. His broken-kneed pony was ready at the foot of the steps, and, mounting, he rode off in the fast-fading, orange twilight. He checked his pony's dancing with a savage jerk at its mouth, stopped at the edge of the pasture to cast back an ugly look at the bare, ramshackle buildings of the school, and cursed it with a ludicrous solemnity. It had grown a habit with him, and drunk or sober

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whenever he came to it, or whenever he left it, he cursed it in a set formula.

For a wonder his pony did not fall once all the four miles to Gray's house; and, in the cooler evening air, some of the bitterness had faded from his mind by the time he dismounted before the low, one-storied building. He found Gray and five planters playing loo in the room which, before Mrs. Gray had died, had been the drawing-room. A fine smell of cooking filled the house; and the chatter of negroes and clink of knives in the dining-room showed that they were laying the table for dinner. The players, absorbed in the game, gave him a hasty greeting. Gray murmured that cock-tails would be ready in a few minutes, and went on dealing. Crissingham watched them play a hand, wandered aimlessly out of the room on to the cooler verandah at the back, whence there stretched before his eyes a wonderful view of starry sky, and dark, star-besprinkled sea, and found himself in the presence of Gray's daughter, Caroline.

She was sitting rocking slowly to and fro in a rocking-chair (Crissingham believed that she spent all her life in that rocking-chair), gazing out over the sea; and a vague discomfort filled him. The mere presence of a woman was disagreeable to him now; he disliked them as he had always disliked cats, he was uneasy when a woman was in the same room with him. They exchanged a murmur of greeting and rested, either of them, in an embarrassed silence. He knew her as a slender girl of seventeen

with colourless face, colourless hair, colourless eyes, and thin, formless lips faintly pink, the proper daughter of a race out of which the sun had been for six generations stewing the strength. He had never heard her utter a sentence of ten words, he believed her mind to be as colourless as her body ; and he was right. But he did not know that about her high cheekbones there was a faint flush, that her colourless eyes were almost shining, that her slow pulse had quickened ten beats, that she sat, her chair rocking no longer, in a dull joy and a dull pain : a joy that she was gazing, bold in the darkness, at his face outlined dimly against the starry sky ; a pain that, for all his nearness, he was far, far beyond all reaching, away from her, that it was utterly out of her power to awaken in him even a moment's interest in her, to let him know even a little of the interest she felt in him. For Crissingham had come into her empty life, and filled it : his melancholy, bitter face had stirred in her a dull wonder, and a dull pity ; the story of his commonplace jilting, which had leaked from his lips when he was drunk, had grown in her mind to the proportions of a tragedy ; he had revealed to her the possibilities of life ; and round him her fancy wove its scanty web. He filled her thoughts : the house of dreams her poor imagination built for her was a shabby enough dwelling ; she dwelt in it as, at the most, his servant. She never rose to the height of dreaming herself dear to him : in her humility to be merely near him was to dwell in a palace.

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Crissingham leaning over the rails of the verandah, staring at the sea, forgot that she was there ; and she sat gazing at his face, almost in an agony, her few poor ideas jostling one another in her confused head, her very throat parched as she tried to think of something to say to him, to crush down her timidity ; and when her father's voice, shouting that the cocktails were ready, called him within the house, a blank despair, at having failed to nerve herself to the effort, at having lost so rare a chance, fell upon her spirit ; and great, slow tears welled out of her eyes.

But after a while she moved her rocker near the windows of the dining-room (she never dined with her father's men-parties), so that she could see Crissingham and listen to him ; and found herself far happier doing so than when he had stood beside her on the verandah, for she was spared the hopeless effort to try to speak to him. Under the influence of the whisky and soda there developed, as she gazed, a younger Crissingham with bright eyes and straight lips, who talked and laughed with the light-heartedness almost of a boy ; and she looked and listened entranced. Now and again, indeed, the bitterness in him welled up into bitter speech : sometimes she did not understand it, sometimes it hurt her with a dull pain : but she sat on, gazing and listening, all through the dinner, all through the evening when they had moved back into the drawing-room to play loo.

As the hours passed, her pleasure changed slowly

to pain, to a dull hate of Fortune that she was unkind to him, to a dull hate of those cautious, greedy planters who took so unmercifully every advantage of his drunken recklessness, of the liquor which in the end left him wild and stupid ; and when the party broke up, and she had heard them set, with shouts of boorish laughter, the swaying Crissingham on his pony, she crept to her bed in the broken exhaustion of one who has been beaten.

The weeks passed very slowly ; she saw him rarely ; she lived her empty, silent, uneventful life, brightened only by her poor dream. Once her father met him and brought him to dinner ; but in her vain struggle against her timidity she had found no words to say to him, and had passed through the dinner as in an oppressive nightmare. Once she had deserted her rocking-chair, and driven out in the old buggy on the chance of meeting him. She did meet him, riding aimlessly along the cliff-road ; and her pleasure at the sight of him faded swiftly to the pain of the same conflict between her unnerving timidity and her desire to awake his interest. She overcame her timidity, for once, by a violent effort, so far as to stop the buggy as he was passing it, and then in a horror found herself tongue-tied when he drew rein. He looked at her with lack-lustre eyes and waited for her to speak ; she cast one swift glance at his face, and her eyes fixed on the mule ; in her intense embarrassment she was only conscious that she wished that it was a horse (a horse was



more genteel) ; and a dull red began to gather in her cheeks.

Crissingham awoke suddenly, and found himself facing that disagreeable object, a woman : he did not know what he had said to her, or what she had said to him ; he only wished to get away ; and he said hurriedly, " Well, a pleasant drive, Miss Gray."

She bowed clumsily, tugged at the mule, and the buggy went creaking on. The dull red was long fading out of her cheeks ; she was filled with shame at having seemed so stupid to him ; she wished for the moment never to see him again. She did not realise that in stopping the buggy she had advanced a step in the conquest of her timidity ; that she might hope to steel herself, in the course of a few months, to speak to him without discomfort about the weather.

But though she met him so rarely, she heard about him often : Aunt Jane, their housekeeper, her old nurse, had learned that he was the only theme on which Caroline would talk, and she kept her informed of his doings. He was the chief theme, after sugar and the rainfall, of the talk of the planters who came to see her father.

It had been a relief to Crissingham when the holidays came to an end, and the work gave him less time to himself ; but the life, the drink, and the climate were surely doing their work. The chains of debt were binding him more firmly to his stake ; and the spectres of dead hopes and wasted chances



thronged more densely around him, and gibbered bitterer and bitterer taunts. The stories about him grew worse and worse : the night watchmen of neighbouring estates told of him galloping wildly along the cliffs in the moonlight, shouting and screaming ; he had been seized with a fit of the delirium tremens in school ; the head master and the governing body were at a loss what to do. Caroline lived in a perpetual, dull anguish. At the end of the term it was known that he had been asked to resign, and had refused ; that the governing body were more at a loss than ever. He went abroad no longer ; he had sold his pony and trap, and sunk to drinking rum, bought with the money ; he lay on his bed all day in a stale-drunken soddenness, and his nights were a raging, drunken delirium or a senseless, melancholy stupor.

When the inevitable end came, it came more shocking than any one had feared : Glader's School was burned down, and Crissingham was burned in it. The watchman declared that he had heard a pistol-shot before the glow of the flames caught his eye ; and it seemed likely that Crissingham in his drunken fury had fired the place and blown his brains out. A few charred bones were all that were found of him ; and those enjoyed the largest funeral celebrated in the parish within the memory of man.

When the news of his death came to Caroline, it stunned her. The spring of life in her dried up, an utter blankness settled on her spirit, she lived in a

stupor. She had always been so silent a creature that her father never noticed that the monosyllables, which had shown him that she was listening to his long grumbles about the price of sugar and the rainfall, had ceased to fall from her lips at the pauses in his tirades. She had always eaten so little that he did not notice that now she ate scarcely anything. She had gone out so seldom that he did not notice that now she never went out at all. But Aunt Jane was not so blind. Caroline was a great part of her life, the most important figure in it, more important, indeed, than her husband or her own black brood. Other black women had black children, but none of them had a white child ; for her perpetual intimate connection with Caroline, the fact that she had brought her up, that even now Caroline was dependent on her, had brought Aunt Jane to regard her as indeed her own child. Caroline was her pride, the object of her greatest tenderness. She saw the change in her, that she could not eat, that she did not even rock herself as she sat gazing over the sea, that her slenderness was growing leanness. She felt vaguely that she must awaken her to life, or she would slip away from it ; and she found that all her efforts to awaken her were vain.

But in Caroline's stupor a desire had sprung to life in the child, and was slowly gathering strength—it had sprung from her dull regret that she had not seen Crissingham for six weeks before he died—the desire to see him again. She was profoundly

superstitious with all the superstitions of the negroes. Her education had been an attendance for six terms at a small school kept by a planter's widow ; and there she had learned to read and write with difficulty. But her real teachers had been the negro servants amongst whom she had always lived, to whom alone she had ever talked. She believed in Obeah, the negro witchcraft, in healing and harming by spells, and she believed firmly in duppies, the spirits of the dead, visible to the living, sometimes even conversing with them. She desired to see Crissingham's duppy ; it was her vague underthought that now, having put off the veil of the flesh, Crissingham knew her feelings towards him. She came to wish ardently to assure him of them ; and she knew that she would not fear his spirit as she had feared him living, that she would be able to tell him. But she had never told Aunt Jane of her passion for him, though she knew that Aunt Jane had had an inkling of it ; and for a long while she did not tell her her desire. She was content to sit in the twilight, or lie for hours in the night, all her frail being strung to a pitch in her straining effort to summon to her the wandering spirit of her dead lover.

But all her efforts were in vain ; and at last, in a despair, she told Aunt Jane her desire. Aunt Jane raised her fat hands and cried, " Good dear, Miss Carh'line ! "

But Caroline was set on having her way ; for the first time since Crissingham's death she awoke from

her stupor, and in a feverish heat poured forth commands and adjurations by turns, stormed weakly, wept, brought Aunt Jane to her wits' end, and at last wrung from her a reluctant consent to help her compass her end. Aunt Jane was a devout Christian, a ritualist, but under the veneer of her Christianity was a firm belief in nameless, malignant powers who might be placated, or even bent to serve a human will, by the proper rites. One of her cousins had had Obeah put upon her, and had had the centipede which had been gnawing her vitals drawn out of her by charms, and the simple expedient of clapping half a gourd with a piece of lighted paper in it to her back, and when the flames had exhausted the air in it and fixed it tightly to the flesh, of wrenching and screwing it painfully off. The Obeah-man had shown the cousin the centipede. Aunt Jane herself had consulted an Obeah-man about the sickness of her cow, and had paid one dollar twenty cents for a charm to cure it. The cow had died, indeed, but that had been the fault of her misapplication of the charm. There was no limit to the power of the Obeah-man; and she left Caroline, pledged to obtain from him a charm to raise the dead. But at times during the day, while she was about her household duties, her acquired Christian conscience troubled her; and she soothed it by calling to mind the story of the witch of Endor. It was the less difficult to soothe since, like the rest of her race, her actions were very little affected by her strong emotional religion, and she set out after dark to the

home of the Obeah-man, resolved that her nursling should not be balked of her desire.

He lived in a hut at the end of a street, as the negro villages are called, some two miles away, and she found him sitting before his door drinking high wines with two friends. She sat down with them ; and the two friends, understanding quickly that she had come on business, went away to their homes. To Aunt Jane, a well-to-do woman and an old client, the Obeah-man made no secret of his power of raising the dead ; he devoted himself rather to making it clear to her that it was a far more difficult and expensive matter than removing spells cast upon evilly enchanted cows ; and some two hours were spent in discussing whether the fair price of it were two dollars or three. In the end she agreed to pay him two dollars and forty cents, upon the understanding that he should lose no time in preparing the potion. She came back to find Caroline dry-lipped with suspense and expectation ; and womanly for all her black skin, she tantalized her with airs of mystery for a while before she began telling her of her success. When at last she told her, the unfortunate child, beside herself with joy, could only sob hysterically, " Oh, Aunt Jane ! Oh, Aunt Jane ! "

She went to sleep that night happier than she had ever been.

Three nights later, the Obeah-man met Aunt Jane at the end of the drive, gave her the precious potion in a little brown earthenware bottle which had once held Stephen's Blue-Black Ink, and in-

structed her when and how it should be taken. At the next midnight Caroline stood at the edge of a pool, where cattle were watered, and aflame with the assurance of gratifying on the instant her longing, drank the noxious draught. She was scarcely aware of the vileness of its taste, and stood with every sense tensely alert, awaiting the promised vision. She did not know what she would see, a radiant form or a grey shadow, but her wide, straining eyes stared about her; she quivered to every rustle among the canes, and for the first time she realised in all its fullness her passion for the dead man. The words, almost eloquent words, which should reveal it, trembled on her tongue. But the minutes passed, the surface of the pool gleamed unruffled, the clearing among the canes round it was empty, even of a shadow, in the silver blaze of moonlight; only the rustling of faint airs stirring the cane-tops, the mournful cries of the thousand whistling-frogs, fell on her ear. She called twice, faintly and more loudly, the dead man; and then a flood of disappointment burst upon her and overwhelmed her; she sat down and fell to a hopeless, racking sobbing. Presently Aunt Jane came to her and carried her, a light enough burden, to the house.

The fall from such a height of hope left Caroline broken for days. But little by little her desire awoke afresh, and with it a stronger resolve to accomplish it. Aunt Jane sought out the Obeah-man again, and by reproaches, demands for a return

of the money, and promise of more, spurred him to fresh efforts. The potion having failed, by no fault of his as he again and again declared, he would commit himself to no assurance. Certain things might be done, but with a white person there was no saying which of them would be the right one; they could but try all the resources of his skill until they hit upon it. The lack of a definite assurance was a relief to Caroline, it prevented the extreme acuteness of disappointment after each failure. With Aunt Jane, and as they grew fuller and more elaborate, with three or four more negro women, they tried all the rites that the Obeah-man, officiating as high priest, could thresh out of his memory. Mummeries at the new moon, mummeries at the full moon, mummeries always childish, often disgusting, in her infatuation the wretched child went through them all, with hope ever springing afresh after failure. And so strong was the influence of her fixed idea, so fascinating the forbidden tampering with the powers of darkness, that she carried the little band of seekers with her to an eagerness as great as her own. The mummeries grew more and more savage, as savage instincts long dormant in the negroes awoke to furious life; they came at last to blood-offerings, first fowls, then a kid; and their superstition quickened the lust for blood.

But the weeks had passed in their fruitless efforts; and in the reactions from hope to despair, from despair to hope, Caroline's life had burned down to a faint flicker; she lived only by the strength of her



desire. The Obeah-man confessed himself at the end of the resources of his knowledge and invention. There was only one thing left untried and that he would not try; he would not even tell them what it was. He was obstinately deaf to their appeals to his vanity, his compassion, even to his cupidity; and they would have failed to move him, but that in practising his barbarous rites he had awakened in himself an appetite for the violent emotional stimulant. He could not bear the sudden deprivation, and coming one night to Caroline he told her that the thing untried was the sacrifice of the goat without horns. For a moment Caroline recoiled from the thought, but presently under the insane obsession of her fixed idea, she admitted it to her consideration; and little by little it grew possible, and from possible desirable. Aunt Jane's resistance was weak: in her too the awakened savage instincts were strong, and the idea was not new to her, for though perhaps forty years had passed since the last infant sacrifice in the island, her grandmother had been present at one. But in the expenditure on the rites that had been performed, the fifty dollars, the poor savings of Caroline's life, had dwindled to twenty-three, and there was little money to spare. Again, there was the danger; the authorities put down all Obeah with a strong hand, and this, if it were found out, they would surely visit with a terrible punishment. But Caroline would listen to no objections, and by the force of the passion that possessed her, fired Aunt Jane to an



enthusiasm equal with her own. It chanced too that Aunt Jane could lay her hands on a baby, with a fair hope of secrecy; her sister Isabella had been lately left a widow with six small children and a baby a month old. She was hard put to it to feed six children; the baby was a heavy burden. Moreover, she feared her well-to-do sister, and looked to her for aid. But when Aunt Jane approached her on the matter, Isabella, who like herself was a devout ritualist, cried, "Good dear, Jane! What shall I tell de Reverend, when I go t' confession?"

Aunt Jane rebuked her, pointing out that to say anything to the Reverend about Obeah would be to shame Christianity. She disposed of other objections which she felt, seeing that the baby was a burden, were foolish sentimentality, more easily; and they came to the root of the matter, the question of the fair price. Isabella held out for twenty dollars; Aunt Jane, shocked by such cupidity in one of her kin, after an appeal to her better feelings, after pointing out that several young pigs, or even a well-grown calf, could be bought for the sum she asked for a burdensome baby, only beat her down to seventeen dollars, and as she came away declared in her bitterness of spirit that her sister, her own sister, was a low, black nigger.

Caroline went out on this, her last attempt to compass her desire, on a still, stifling night at the end of the hot season. In the intense, silver blaze of moonlight all things were black silhouettes; and the serried mass of canes, twelve feet high on either

side of the narrow road, with their spiky tops rising spearlike, oppressed her with a vague sense of a hostile, lowering host. She walked very feebly, upheld by Aunt Jane's arm; the heat seemed to be pressing the weak life out of her. When they reached the main road, two tall, brawny negresses, assistants in the rites, carried her by turns to the spot, three miles down the coast, where a little river flows through a dark gorge into the sea, and there the Obeah-man and the victim awaited her.

She was dazed, and the sacrifice was a dim dream. She was faintly aware of the women stripping off her clothes, of the child squealing like a stuck sucking-pig she had once heard, of the warm patter of blood on her skin. She was too dazed to see a generation's civilisation assert itself in the blacks in a sudden horror of the deed, to hear the splash of the little body flung into the stream to float out to sea and be buried in the baracoutas. She did not feel the hasty washing off of the blood. But on the top of the cliff she revived; a sudden, strong belief that she would have her desire came upon her, and she demanded to be taken at once to Glader's School, the scene of Crissingham's death. It was out of their way, their horror still shook them, but Aunt Jane saw beyond mistake that it was the last thing Caroline would ever ask her; and they set out for it.

In the lane leading to it, a hundred yards from the school, the two negresses refused to carry her a step nearer to it, they were afraid. With Aunt

Jane's help she tottered slowly, very slowly, to the end of the lane, and they stood before the gutted building. The walls stood gaunt and bare in the moonblaze, almost indecent for their lack of a habitable air. Aunt Jane looked, and began to tremble; the moonlight falling through the ruined roof threw strange shadows. Was it a form or a shadow at the window of the ill-fated Crissingham's room? Was it some strange moonlight effect, or did a grey, unsubstantial figure float wavering down the dismantled steps? Caroline slipped from her trembling grasp, and moved forward with outstretched arms.

Aunt Jane dropped in a huddled heap with her skirt over her head, remembered her Christianity; and the incoherent prayers gasped through her rattling teeth. Caroline's eyes went dark, she clutched once or twice at the air, sank slowly on to her hands and knees, and then tumbled on to her left side: her life had flickered out.

## THE NOAH'S ARK

CHRISTMAS Eve was of the real old-fashioned kind. The air was frosty and bracing ; there were little heaps of snow in the gutters, and there was snow on the roofs. The sun was setting in a red sky, a grateful promise of a real, old-fashioned Christmas Day. But as John Bright came along Pall Mall, he felt dimly that he could have done with weather of a less real old-fashioned Christmas kind ; indeed, he could have stood very well the green Christmas which makes a full churchyard—a muggy Christmas with a south-west wind.

It must not be supposed, however, that John Bright was really cold. His blue hands were perhaps rather numb. But the glad tidings, that newspapers keep you warm, have spread even to Poplar in East London ; and there was a warm layer of newspaper between his ragged jacket and raggeder shirt. Moreover, though perhaps it may be hardly delicate to mention the fact, his wife had also lined his ragged trousers with newspaper. It is true that his boots were incomplete, but it is an irrefutable fact that walking keeps you warm ; and he *was* walking. He was not walking as briskly as it is possible to walk, perhaps, for he had been on

his feet a good many hours. A rumour of work to be had in Central London had brought him from Poplar in the morning. He had been disappointed of the job, and had wandered westward in a vague hope of finding something to do, and earning a shilling. He had not found anything to do, and he had not earned any shilling.

Again, his desire for muggy, warmer weather did not spring from the fact that he was starving. He had eaten nearly a pennyworth of bread that morning, and it was only four o'clock in the afternoon. Moreover, though he had been one of the pampered unemployed for eight weeks, he had during that time eaten at least twelve shillings' worth of solid food, chiefly bread. No one could honestly say that John Bright was starving—rather empty, if you like, but certainly not starving.

It was in Cockspur Street that the gentleman in the fur coat gave him the sixpence. John Bright did not notice the portly, fur-coated figure. He was not taking much notice of the scene through which he moved, not even of the arresting, splendid motor-cars which rushed gleaming by. He was intent on the business of getting back to his little Poplar home. But the gentleman in the fur coat was struck by the lack of cheerfulness in John Bright's face, and in a spasm of benevolence he said, "Hey, my man, you look hungry; here's sixpence for you."

John Bright could hardly believe his ears. He took the sixpence, mumbling thanks. The gentle-

man in the fur coat passed on, and presently the spasm of benevolence passed too ; and his conscience began to prick him. He was an old-fashioned Whig, a firm believer in the fine old economical doctrine that it is little short of a crime to give sixpence to a hungry man in the street. It pauperises him. The memory of his rash and thoughtless act kept troubling him now and again throughout the evening. He felt that the spasm of unconsidering benevolence had made him false to his principles. He frowned uneasily at the thought of it.

John Bright, however, little recking of the qualms with which his thoughtless acceptance of the sixpence was troubling a fellow-creature's conscience, faced the world in quite another spirit. The rich, silvery feel of sixpence in his tightly clenched hand, thrust into his trouser pocket for greater safety, braced him to his journey. It seemed to put more vigour into his legs, and his shuffle quickened to a steady two and a half miles an hour. He went along with his glowing imagination fixed on the Christmas Eve festivities the sixpence would bring to his little Poplar home.

He turned but a careless eye on St. Paul's as he went by. For though on occasion he could have been God's Englishman with the best of them, this was not an occasion on which their national greatness was very prominent in his mind ; and his heart did not appreciably swell at the sight of that admirable monument of it. He had half a thought that it would help him home quicker to go inside

and get a little warmer, but the quick reflection that his fellow-Episcopalians in the cathedral would hardly bestow glances of warm welcome on him in his ragged condition checked him, and he shuffled on. He did not draw the comfort that might have been expected from the nourishing, greasy smell of the restaurants and cookshops he passed. It seemed rather to increase the discontent in his stomach.

By the time he reached the end of the White-chapel Road the invigorating glow from the silvery feel of the sixpence had to some degree faded, and the clamour of his discontented stomach was testing severely the resolve he had formed to reach his little Poplar home with the sixpence unbroken, and wait for his Christmas Eve supper till he could enjoy it with his wife and little boy. He turned deaf ears to his stomach's clamour, and shuffled on. He could have wished that the east wind had been less Christmaslike and piercing, and he hunched his shoulders together in his protective newspaper to get as little of it as he could. The stars were shining now with a frosty, Christmas brilliance. He did not look up at their inspiring radiance ; by no means because he lacked a soul to soar to the empyrean, but because he had acquired the habit of walking with his eyes fixed intently on the pavement, in the hope of finding something. This prudent habit had often brought him things to eat, bits of bread, the riper half of a banana, or the core of an apple—not very appetising, perhaps, but staying.



They were quite easy to clean when the weather was dry. He had a vague dream of finding a splendid halfpenny. It would have rendered his resolve to reach his little Poplar home with the sixpence unbroken, easier to keep. With another halfpenny he would have made short work of his stomach's clamour. It was a fond and foolish dream; the wayfarers along the Whitechapel and Mile End Roads do not lose a halfpenny.

Passing Stepney Green, old memories banished for a while the sense of emptiness and cold. He had lived there in the days of his affluence, when for eight months on end he had earned eighteen shillings a week. Those had been days! His heart warmed to the thought of them. As he passed the house in which he had lodged his great idea came to him, the idea that something must be done to make Christmas really Christmas for Henry. Henry was his little boy. A wave of enthusiasm flooded his being at the thought, and quickened his shuffle to quite three miles an hour for two hundred and fifty yards. He pondered the idea in an excitement that brought him to the end of the Mile End Road.

It was with some relief that in Stratford High Street he turned off to the right through a maze of streets down to Poplar. He no longer faced the seasonable east wind, and the force of the real old-fashioned Christmas was broken for him. Still, in spite of this advantage, he staggered now and then. He observed with no pleasure that Three



Mills river and Channel Sea river were frozen in the most seasonable fashion. He was staggering a good deal as he shuffled down Poplar High Street. His heart was not so swollen with gladness as it might have been at having finished his journey ; and his legs showed no little reluctance to carry him up the rickety stairs to the top of 9 Marlborough Rents. But they did ; and he came at last into his little Poplar home. He had done the seven miles in twenty minutes under the three hours.

The stars, shining through as much of the glass of the window as had not been replaced by paper or rags, filled the room with a faint glimmer. John Bright sat down on the floor—it was all there was to sit on—and leant back against the wall.

“ Got anything, Jack ? ” said a voice from the corner, a faint voice, tremulous with keen anxiety.

“ Sixpence,” said John Bright. “ Sixpence.”

For all his weariness there was a ring of triumph in his tone.

There was a faint rustling, a match was struck, and a candle-end lighted. Its light revealed John Bright's little Poplar home. There was not much to reveal, indeed ; the one-candle-power light did the revealing admirably ; more illumination would have been otiose. In the corner there was a bed on the floor ; at least, there was a small, thin mattress, covered with a blanket and two sacks. Between the blanket and the sacks was a layer of grateful, warming newspapers. Three cups, a basin, a jug, and two plates stood on the mantelpiece ;

a little saucepan stood in the grate, and beside it a handleless bedroom jug with water in it.

"E's asleep," said Mrs. John Bright, nodding towards the bed.

She spoke of Henry Bright, their little boy. The light showed her a bright but white-faced Englishwoman; her eyes were sparkling. They sparkled at the thought of the sixpence to spend. Her contours were not rounded. Indeed, those who were less attached to her than John Bright found her of an unlovely leanness. He did not, though he could have wished her rounder. As she put on her shawl she told him of a great piece of luck which had befallen her that day. She had followed a carelessly loaded coal-cart, and brought back in her shawl eleven lumps of coal which had fallen from it. She had not lighted the fire, indeed; she had waited to see whether he brought home any money. If he had not, they might have exchanged the coal with a wealthier neighbour for some bread. She had, however, hopefully laid a fire with four pieces of coal on it. She lighted what was left of the match she had used to light the candle in its flame, and kindled the fire.

John Bright gave her the sixpence, and bade her bring back three-halfpence of it.

"Raight oh," she said cheerfully.

"An' don't ferget it's Crismus. The nipper oughter 'ave somethin' extry—sugar now," he said.

She nodded brightly, took the jug, and went quickly. She supposed that her husband meant to

spend a penny on a Christmas Eve glass of ale and a halfpenny on tobacco. She was quite content. The man, the bread-winner, must have his luxuries ; it was only fair. She hoped that when Henry was asleep after supper John would take her with him to the pub, and give her a drink out of his glass. The thought of the taste of the cheery, but perhaps rather thin, liquor made her mouth water.

When she had gone John took the candle, and going gingerly to the side of the bed stooped down and looked at Henry. As he did so his face filled with an abandonment of fondness really extravagant. Then he blew out the candle with careful gentleness so as not to blow away any of the hot grease and shorten its life, and sat down before the fire. He was quite greedy with it ; he tried to spread himself out, half encircling it, so as to get the whole of its warmth.

Presently his wife came back. Her white face was faintly flushed with the joy of spending the fourpence-halfpenny and with the thought that Henry would have bread and milk, with sugar in it, for his Christmas Eve supper. She had bought three-pennyworth of bread (stale bread, because she got more of it for her money), a pennyworth of milk, and a farthing's-worth of sugar. After giving John the three-halfpence she would still have a farthing left for emergencies. She had been sorely tempted to spend it on tea ; but she had refrained from the extravagance.

John took the three-halfpence, broke off a crust of bread, said he would soon return, and to his wife's disappointment hurried off. She took it that he was going to get his glass of beer and his tobacco at once. But he did not go to the pub. Munching the bread with a delicious sense of satisfaction and relief, he made his way to the schoolroom where the vicar had established the annual toy fair, to which warm-hearted, charitable people send the damaged and broken toys of their children from all the more comfortable quarters of London. The room was full and strongly scented. Some people prefer the scent of pigsties to the scent of the Britons of Poplar; they maintain that it is an airier scent; this is purely a matter of taste. John was not affected by the scent. The toys filled his mind. He scanned them with intent, searching eyes, resolved to spend the three-halfpence, clutched so tightly in his hand, so as to give Henry the greatest delight. Some of the toys were marked as high as a shilling, large toys, and but little damaged. John Bright was not blind to their magnificence; but he kept his keen attention strictly to the toys within his means. He was still rather dazed by his long walk, and he found the effort a strain. Presently his soul was harried by the difficulty of choosing between a reinless wooden horse, a woolly lamb, woolly at least in places, and a Noah's Ark. At last, after assuring himself that there were quite a number of animals inside it, he bought the Noah's Ark. On his way home he trod the earth like a conqueror.

He found his wife just awaking Henry, after having made ready his bread and milk—with sugar in it. She had used only half the milk and sugar ; the rest were being kept for his breakfast. She had added water to the milk that it might sop as much bread as possible.

John Bright displayed the Noah's Ark with a triumphant air.

At the sight of it her face filled with unbelieving amazement, and the tears sprang to her eyes. " Why, if that ain't a little bit of orl right ! " she cried. " Whatever will 'e sye to it ? "

In her surprise she failed to consider that the three-halfpence must have been spent, and with it gone all chance of her enjoying a taste of John's beer.

" Arf a mo," said John. " Let's arryngs them so's 'e sees 'em all in a lump when 'e wykes."

He took the animals out of the Ark and stood them up in a line on the hearthstone. He did not do it quickly, because his fingers, still rather bluish, fumbled them. The elephant had but three legs, and would not stand at all. When he had finished they looked at them with pride and admiration. Then Mrs. Bright awoke Henry.

Some parents might have been ashamed to have so small and thin a three-year-old child ; the Brights were not. They could not have watched him with more excited, expectant eyes if he had been of the average weight of his age. He disappointed them. He did not look at the Noah's Ark. The

smell of the bread and milk was too much for him ; he held up both his puny hands towards the steaming basin and whimpered for it.

Mrs. Bright took the basin from the mantelpiece, and sitting down on the floor with Henry in her lap, began to feed him. John Bright cut two slices of bread, filled two cups with water, and sat down beside her. As they munched their bread they watched Henry. Now and again they looked up from him to one another with that curious twentieth-century, English look of people whom the workhouse may any day sever. It is a clinging look.

Presently the edge was taken off Henry's hunger, and he could give thought to things of the world outside his stomach. His wandering eyes rested on the line of animals, and they opened wider and wider. He pointed to them and said, "Gee-gee."

Mr. and Mrs. Bright laughed happily. Henry gazed earnestly at the animals during the rest of his supper. As his father and mother ate, they talked gravely of the pity of the elephant's having only three legs.

But with the appalling shiftlessness which makes it impossible to do anything for the pampered English unemployed, they neglected to heat the water they were drinking and make their supper more Christmaslike.

## PRISCILLA'S POACHING

**M**Y name is Priscilla Chute, and I am a poacher. But I do not think that I could have done otherwise, and under the same circumstances I would certainly do it again. It was partly the fault of the Boer War, partly of the London and Globe Finance Corporation, and surely I am not to blame for either.

The Chutes and the Baldrans have lived at Fleetham Regis since the days of the Stuarts—the Chutes at Blackstead and the Baldrans at the Hall. The Baldrans own the land all round ; the Chutes have always been rolling stones, and gathered very little moss—indeed, they say at Fleetham : “ The Chutes only come home to die.” Most of them failed to do even that ; fighting or by fever, they have died all over the world, and their graves are high-tide marks of the British Empire. We know, if any one does, that “ on the bones of the English the English flag is stayed.”

When I was a child there were six of us at Blackstead : five boys, two brothers and three cousins, and myself. During their holidays they teased me a great deal, and bullied me a little ; but I learned to do most things that boys do—I am even a quite



decent featherweight boxer—and some things that many boys have no chance of doing. In the house my mother ruled us ; out of it “ them little Chute devils ” were known for miles round. Of the poor boys only Tom is left. Harry and Noel lie on the North-west Frontier ; Roger and Jack on the banks of the Tugela. Tom had stayed at Blackstead, partly because he had failed for Sandhurst and the Militia, partly to look after me when our mother died ; but he had been one of the first of the Yeomanry to volunteer for the Cape, and in November he was invalided home. It looked, indeed, as if he had only come home to die ; and Jane, our old nurse, and I set ourselves to drag him back, inch by inch, from death. We nursed him night and day, watching and sleeping turn about, until at last he began to mend a very little.

Then the last blow fell. I had been short of money before Tom came back ; I had been waiting and waiting for the dividend from the London and Globe, and it never came ; then, on the morning of my nineteenth birthday, a circular came to say that it would pay no dividend at all, at any rate for a long while. It was a birthday ! I thought, and worried, and puzzled my brain, but I could see no way of getting money. There were six pounds in the house, three people to feed, and one of them an invalid needing the most delicate and nourishing food. I knew of no one to ask help of. I worried and worried until, in the afternoon, I had that rarest of all things to me—a headache. Fortunately



Tom fell asleep, and, leaving Jane to watch him, I set out for a walk with the dogs.

I was walking along, with my eyes on the road instead of on the fields and the hedgerows as usual, still worrying and still hopeless, when I was aroused by a rustling in the hedge and a rush from the dogs. There was a squeaking and fluttering, and Vixen came out of the ditch with a partridge in her mouth. I took it from her, and found it had been badly wounded and had crept away to die; she had finished it. I slipped it under my cloak, rejoicing at the windfall, for it would make Tom an appetising soup, when it flashed upon me that I had stumbled upon a mine of food. During the last two years the game had been strictly preserved, for Sir John Baldran, the new baronet, was going to shoot over his Fleetham estate. There had even been talk of his spending part of the winter at the Hall, which had been shut for nearly thirty years, since his father, Sir Hubert, had never been able to endure the place after my mother's marriage. The country was fuller of game and rabbits than ever it had been before; and I was soon glowing at visions of abundance of the most tempting food for an invalid. The six pounds would last six months, for our cow gave us milk and butter, our hens eggs; we only needed flour and groceries. By that time Tom would be well and able to make money somehow, and the London and Globe (such was my fond hope) would pay a dividend.

I turned and set out home, my headache gone.

As I went I considered the other side of the matter. Poaching was wrong, of course ; but I had done so much of it with the poor boys that to that particular sin my conscience was hardened. And if it had not been hardened, I could not have listened to it, because Tom came first. But, unfortunately, poaching had grown far more dangerous than it used to be. The keepers were new men, strangers to the neighbourhood, and, by the number of poachers they had prosecuted, plainly bent on doing their work thoroughly. It did not matter ; I must take the risk. The sight of many scampering rabbits, and the calling of pheasants from coppice to coppice, cheered me. I had never had a bicycle, and consequently I knew every foot of the country for five miles round ; while, thanks to my early training, I had learned to watch the ways of the wild dwellers in it. On the other hand, I was handicapped by a great disadvantage. Though I do not mind shooting creatures, because the gun does the killing, I could not possibly kill any I caught, in cold blood, with my hands ; and I should have to rely on snares, which strangled them for me. The boys had laughed often enough at my squeamishness, as they called it, and I tried hard to argue myself out of it. It was no use ; much as I should have preferred birds, I must be content with hares and rabbits. I might, indeed, set horsehair springes for pheasants, but we had never had any luck with them ; and they are so conspicuous when thrown, for they hold the bird hanging in the air. It must be hares and rabbits.

When I reached home, I lighted a lantern and went up to the big loft above the empty stables where the boys had kept most of their sporting paraphernalia, and there in a corner I found a score of snares, their pegs still hanging to them by the rotten strings, and even a bundle of the little notched sticks in which you set up the wires. I carried half a dozen up to Tom's room, and set about cleaning them with sand. They had been put away greased, and were very little rusted. Then I made sure that the slip-knots ran easily, and fastened them to their pegs with fresh strings. Of course, I wore gloves all the time, gloves rubbed well in the feathers of the dead partridge. The scent of the hand will cling to a snare for hours ; and nothing will go near it. In less than an hour they were ready for use, and I took my old cloak and sewed inside it two great pockets, either of which would hold three rabbits. Then I made my first plan.

At half-past nine I set out with my snares for Horton's Dingle, which lies a mile and a half farther from the village than Blackstead. I went quickly till I came to where the road runs within a hundred yards of Fleetham Wood, and then I stole very quietly along the grass, that no watcher posted in the wood might hear me. A quarter of a mile from the wood the dingle mouth lies, twenty yards from the road, and I slipped into it quickly. I knew every foot of it ; and, besides, it is an easy place to set a wire in. One's skirts are the chief difficulty

in setting wires : unless you are very careful they brush across the run, and no rabbit or hare will pass along it. But here I could stand in the dingle and reach up to the runs which ran along the banks. It was dark ; but, looking upwards, I could see dimly the big trees which were my landmarks. I went a dozen yards into the dingle and set my first wire, driving the peg into the bank three feet below the run with my foot, and rubbing my glove in the dead leaves, to take all human scent from it, before I stuck into the middle of the run the little notched stick which holds up the wire noose. Moving along as noiselessly as a cat, I set all my wires in the first forty yards of the dingle, three on either bank. Then I retraced my steps ; and when I came out on to the road I found myself breathing quickly and sighing with relief. Whether it was that I had grown unused to poaching, or that I had never before poached alone, I had not enjoyed setting my wires one little bit.

I was soon home and in bed. At two o'clock Jane woke me to take my spell of nursing till six ; when she relieved me I went straight off to my wires. After the watching and sleeplessness, the dark morning was horribly chilling ; but hope and hard walking warmed me, and I reached the dingle in a glow. I slipped into it, with my heart beating quickly ; so much depended on success. The first two wires had not been thrown ; I pulled them up, and my heart began to sink. When I felt for the third it was not there. I groped about my feet,

found the string taut, and at the end of it a noosed rabbit. My spirits rose. I pulled up the peg, and dropped rabbit and snare together into my pocket. The fourth wire had not been thrown ; coming to the fifth, I trod on a rabbit it had caught, and pouched him ; the sixth was empty. I came out of the dingle very happy ; my hand had not forgotten its cunning, and my anxiety was gone. I hurried home, had breakfast, went to bed, and slept till eleven.

I awoke to dreams of affluence on the strength of two rabbits, and began at once to make my plan for the day. My heart was set on a hare. I was cleaning the wires by Tom's bedside, when I looked up to find him watching me with the first interest I had seen in his face since he came back.

" Ah ! " he said in his shadow of a voice, " you're going to have a shot at Bunter."

" At a hare," I said. " I got two rabbits last night." And I told him of my wiring the dingle.

His eyes grew almost bright as he listened, and I felt that I had stimulated the desire to live in him. But he was so weak that the moment I had done he fell asleep.

I was indeed impatient for the twilight ; and as soon as it fell I hurried off through the village to the down which stretches above the Hall. A footpath runs up to the top of it, and half-way up a belt of larch and fir runs along the side of the slope. I had often noticed that the hares came to the meadows from the down through the stile and

through a gap in the hedge on the further side of the belt of trees. At the stile I paused and looked round. No one was coming. Below me, to the right, lay Baldran Hall ; and I was surprised to see many of the windows brightly lighted. Sir John Baldran must have come down for his shoot. Of course, I had not heard it. Tom kept Jane and myself prisoners ; we had not even been to church since his return. I wasted no time, but went along the lower side of the hedge to the gap, which lay about fifty yards from the stile. I set my wire in the gap itself, taking the greatest care not to touch the run. Then I went back to the stile, climbed over it, went twenty yards down the hedge, and walked out into the field, letting my skirts drag through the stubble. I walked in a half-circle to a point in the hedge twenty yards on the other side of the stile. I was pretty sure that not a hare would cross that half-circle for several hours. I had closed the passage to the stile ; they would all go through the gap. Then I went quietly home.

When I had told Tom what I had done, he said, " I should like some hare soup."

It was the first time he had fancied anything, and I knew well that he only fancied hare soup made from poached hare. The next day he had it, for going to my wire at ten that night I found it thrown, and a plump young hare in it. Tom took his soup as though he actually enjoyed it, and made me keener than ever on my neighbour's game.

The next night I set no snares, but the evening

after I tried for another hare. I had set my wire in the gap, and was coming down the slope when there came from above the squeal, a little muffled, of a hare. This was luck ; I was saved a journey. I went back to the gap very slowly, for if the hare were not dead when I reached it, I knew that I should let her go. She was dead ; and slipping her neck out of the wire, I put her in my pocket.

I was pulling up the peg, when a voice made my heart jump into my mouth, saying quietly, " I say, this must be great fun." And a man stepped through the gap.

I dropped the wire ; I was caught. Plainly, he had been coming down from the top of the down, and turning aside to find out why the hare squealed, had seen me pocket her.

I could say nothing ; I could only stare, and he raised his cap and said, " I beg your pardon. I'm afraid I startled you."

" Not at all," I stammered ; and my tongue stuck.

He picked up the wire and examined it carefully, and as he did I examined him. He seemed about twenty-seven, tall and slight, with a longish, rather pale face, dark and clean-shaven. I thought he had a foreign air. I began to gather my scattered wits, and wonder what was coming next.

" This is very ingenious," he said, dangling the wire, and looking at me in a queer, solemn kind of way. " Do you know ? I think I'm coming into this."

" What—what do you mean ? " I stammered.

" I'm going to join in the chase, and help you."



"Indeed, you're not!" I cried.

"Indeed, I am. I have a tender conscience, and it must be humoured."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"It is bidding me to take you along, hare, snare, and all, to the nearest keeper, by force if necessary." His eyes sparkled queerly, as though he would really have enjoyed taking me along by force. "I can only quiet it by at once becoming useful and helpful to a fellow-creature. Therefore I'm going to help you in your nefarious occupation."

"But I don't want any help!"

"That's a pity—a great pity," he said with a deep sigh. "Come along to a keeper." He put out his hand to my arm, and I saw that he meant it.

I jumped back, crying, "Oh, you are hateful!"

"I am. How did you guess it? I have a perfectly fiendish nature, cruel and malignant. Sometimes it surprises even me. But come along."

"No, no!" I cried, edging away. "Let me think a moment."

"You shall have three minutes," he said, and looked at his watch, holding it in the moonlight.

I was almost too angry to think; and if it hadn't been for Tom and the six pounds, I needn't have thought at all. But I might be locked up for the night—poachers are—and then the fine and the costs! I was in a mess. I thought of bolting, but that was no use.

He kept looking from my face to his watch; then he said, "Time's up."



"Very well," I said sulkily, "you shall help. But I think you're utterly detestable."

"I am. I told you I was," he said almost proudly. "But is it an honest promise?"

"Oh, you shall help!" I said; and then and there I made up my mind to make every use of him; if I caught anything alive, he should kill it; and if a keeper caught us, he would get into all the trouble. I turned and walked down the hill, and he walked by my side, talking of the beauty of the country in the frosty moonlight, and asking who lived at the big lighted building. My short sulky answers did not spoil his cheerfulness. He told me that his name was Hubertson, that he was no sportsman except in the matter of big game, out of which you could get some excitement, but he thought that poaching might be exciting too. I showed no interest in him at all. As we went through the village he asked which was the road to Swyre, which is four miles off; and I was so glad to hear that he was living so far away that I was less sulky with him the rest of the way to Blackstead. At the gates we, or rather he, arranged to meet there at nine o'clock the night after next, and he said good night.

I had plenty of time the next two days to try and find a way out of this unwelcome companionship; but I could find none. I thought for a little while of giving up poaching altogether, but necessity and my promise to let him help me prevented it. I must make the best of it.

I was very punctual at the gates, hoping that he

would be late and I should get away by myself ; but he was there, quite unconcerned, not in the least shamefaced at having forced himself on me. He talked cheerfully on the way to the dingle, till I bade him follow me noiselessly on the grass past Fleetham Wood. I set the wires, and very little he saw of their setting in that darkness. On the way back he talked of the sense of adventure, the excitement, and the risk ; and once I found myself forgetting my resolve to treat him as the intruder he was, and actually talking to him of the creepy sounds of the night. I stopped short when I remembered.

When we reached Blackstead, he asked when we should go and see what we had caught ; and when I said at six in the morning, he cried, " Good heavens ! How am I to be here at six in the morning ? "

" I can go alone quite well," I said triumphantly. " I'd rather."

" My conscience will not suffer me to let you go about these lonely lanes in the dark," he said ; and at six o'clock he was waiting for me, rather subdued. We got three rabbits.

That was the first of a dozen expeditions. I do not know how it was, but little by little, except for an occasional quarrel, we grew quite friendly ; snubbing and stiffness only made him more cheerful. The whole business was strange and quite wrong ; but I could not help myself. Indeed, I began at last to look forward to our expeditions. He had seen so much, and could talk of it so well ; and, after all, the

country is very dull. He drew from me, without my perceiving what he was doing, the reason of my poaching, and showed himself quite anxious about Tom. I could never make out why he came poaching, for he never learned anything, not even how to set a wire ; and as for helping, he never helped at all. That was why I fell into the way of calling him Helper. I always used to say, "Good evening, Helper," and "Good-bye, Helper." I thought he must come with me for the pleasure of having some one to talk to, for I knew that any one staying at Swyre would find it very dull.

Then I did make him useful. Tom heard a pheasant call across the meadows one evening, and said he would like some pheasant. I made up my mind to get one ; and the Helper should kill it. That night we went up to the little fir plantation about two hundred yards from the north end of Fleetham Wood, to which I had often seen at least a dozen pheasants going to roost. It was a long walk, for we had to make a circuit to come at the plantation from the side furthest from the wood, but the Helper kept me laughing most of the way, and it seemed short. We had to cross a hundred yards of open meadow to get into the plantation, and we crossed it at a run ; for if there were a watcher in it, we must be seen. Once inside the plantation, I hunted noiselessly about for a convenient pheasant. Most of them were roosting too high, or in awkward trees ; but at last I found one about ten feet from the ground which I could get at.

I told the Helper to stand ready and wring its neck, and then scrambled noiselessly on to a bough four feet from the ground. I stood up on it, and gripping the bough on which the pheasant was roosting with my left hand, I slipped my right softly along it till I had him by the legs. I pulled him from his perch ; thrust him downwards, squawking and struggling, into the Helper's hands, and sprang down. I thought he was never going to kill it ; it seemed to go on squawking for an age, and he was swearing under his breath. At last it was quiet ; I put it into my pocket. We hurried out of the plantation and ran for the road. When we reached it I laughed with excited delight ; then, turning to the Helper, I saw that his face was working with angry disgust.

"Never in all my life did I do anything so beastly," he burst out. "I feel like a murdering poulterer."

"Never mind, come along," I said, and started briskly for home. He walked along angrily and sulky ; and I wondered at him.

Presently he growled, "Why couldn't we stick to hares and rabbits? They don't want any necks wringing."

"I wanted a change," I said stiffly.

"It was mere thoughtless selfishness !" he cried. "You never thought how I should feel playing the poulterer."

"I don't care how you felt," I said hotly. "You thrust your help on me, and the first time you are of any use you grumble."

"It was beastly," he said.

"You will have to harden yourself to it, or not come with me. Now that I've got you to kill them for me, I'm going to try for birds often," I said. "However, you needn't come if you don't like."

He growled like a bear, and we walked on in silence. I could not understand his squeamishness about a pheasant; for he had killed moose, elk, and three kinds of bears; besides, the boys had been able to kill anything with their hands without the slightest discomfort.

At the gates of Blackstead we stopped, and I was just going to say good night when he said, "I think I deserve something for killing that bird." And his eyes were shining curiously.

"Yes—yes—you do," I said slowly. "But what—can I give you?"

"I want a kiss," he said in a breathless kind of voice.

For a moment I experienced the strangest feeling I have ever felt, a kind of thrilling feeling; and I knew that I was blushing to the roots of my hair. Then I turned very angry and cried, "You will have nothing of the kind! How dare you talk of such a thing?"

"I dare—oh, I dare!" he said slowly. "I'm certainly going to have one."

"You're not!"

"You showed no consideration for my feelings about that beastly bird, and I won't show any for

yours—so there.” And with that he made a quick movement to catch hold of me.

Without a thought I hit out with all my might, and he went down in a heap. I jumped back and stood staring down at him, panting. He lay quite still, and of a sudden I realised that I must have hurt him very badly. I dropped on one knee beside him, with a sinking heart, and propped him up against the other; his limbs and back were all limp; and I guessed what had happened. I had caught him on the point of the jaw—a thing I might not have done in a hundred times, trying to do it.

For three or four minutes I knelt, propping him up, and trying feebly to bring him to; then I laid him flat, ran to the tool-house, and brought a wheelbarrow. I lifted him into it, wheeled him up to the back door, and dragged him into the kitchen, where the fire was still burning, and huddled him into a big oak chair in front of it. I got some brandy, and forced a little into his mouth; then I brought a basin of cold water and a sponge, and bathed his temples and forehead till at last he heaved a deep sigh. He was coming to, but he looked so horribly pale and shaken that, though I never cry, the tears would keep coming into my eyes at having hurt him so.

Presently he said faintly, “Where—where am I? Oh, my head!”

“In Blackstead kitchen,” I said. “But keep quiet, and you’ll soon feel better.”

He shut his eyes obediently, and I went to the dining-room and wheeled a light sofa into the kitchen. I helped him, half carrying him, on to it, and covered him with rugs. In five minutes he was sleeping heavily, and I went up to Tom. During the next two hours I kept coming down to my new patient ; but he slept on, and began to look better, and at last, tired out, I went to sleep myself on my sofa in Tom's room. I slept heavily, and only awakened at half-past five. I went down at once to see how the Helper was, and to my surprise and dismay I found the sofa empty ; he had gone. I put on my cloak and hat, and hurried down the road and through the village half-way to Swyre, expecting every moment to find him lying by the roadside. Two miles from Swyre I met a couple of labourers coming from it ; they had met and seen no one. I came home anxious enough, but assuring myself that he had been less hurt than I thought, and had reached Swyre safely. At nine that night, and again at ten, I went down to the gates in the hope that he might come to go poaching. He did not come ; and I went to bed very anxious.

The next morning there came a letter bearing the Swyre postmark. It ran :—

DEAR MISS CHUTE,—I am sorry that I behaved so badly last night ; I deserved the penalty I paid for it. My head is only just beginning to join on to my shoulders. I hope that in consideration of having nearly killed me, you will forgive. I



shall come round at nine this evening to help, but chiefly to deprecate your just resentment.

Yours sincerely,

J. HUBERTSON.

The letter cleared away my last anxiety ; but it gave me the freedom to grow angry. I saw plainly that I ought never to have accepted such a situation ; and I made up my mind that he should help me no more. I went down to the gates at a few minutes to nine and locked them. Presently the Helper came striding up, greeted me in a shamefaced way, and began to apologise. I accepted his apologies, and told him that he was never coming poaching with me again. He begged me not to punish him so cruelly, promised never to offend again, and at last lost his temper, as I knew he would, and stormed furiously. Then he made a dash at the gates, tried to open them, and failing, shook and shook them.

I said, " You see how right I was. Good-bye." And I turned and went up the drive, never turning my head for all his entreaties that I would stay and talk to him, if only for two minutes.

For some days I never went out of the grounds, and kept the gates locked after midday. Twice I saw him leaning disconsolately against them. But I missed our expeditions very much ; so much that I wished, for all that they were pleasant to look back on, that I had never snared that wretched hare which which had been to blame for them. Sometimes I wondered whether, when Tom was better, the Helper

would find a way of meeting me again ; but I was still very angry with him.

At last I had to go out and seek more food. I was bent on getting pheasants, and I took the boys' old muzzle-loader, and charged it with a very little powder and a full charge of shot. I did not think that the report would be heard a hundred yards off. At eleven that night I set out for the fir plantation. It seemed a much longer walk than when I went with the Helper. Once in it I found a brace of pheasants roosting at a convenient height, and getting them against a patch of the Milky Way, fired. They both came tumbling down ; I thrust them quickly into my pockets, and hurried through the plantation towards the road. I had not gone twenty yards when a man jumped from between two firs and gripped my arm, crying, " I've got you, my lad ! "

For a moment I tried to shake myself free, but on his heels came another man, and caught my other arm ; and I said :

" Don't tear my coat to pieces, my good men ; I'll go quietly."

" Good Lord, it's a woman ! " cried one of them ; and they began to discuss what they had better do with me. They decided to take me to the Hall.

It was a dismal walk. If I had been a girl in a book, I should have gone dauntlessly to meet my judges ; but I felt very downhearted. Now that they were upon me, the appearing before the bench,

the having my name in the papers, and the scandal, seemed terrible. Besides, there was the fine ; and they might lock me up for the night, and Tom, though on the mend, needed every care.

We went to the back door of the Hall, and after looking at me, the butler said, " You'd better bring the young person to the library, and I'll fetch Sir John."

He led the way to the library, lighted two lamps in it, and poked up the fire. The keepers came with us. Without thinking, I took an easy chair by it, and stretched out my feet to the blaze. The butler frowned at me, and went out, leaving the door ajar. I heard another door open, a babble of voices, clicking billiard-balls, and the butler's voice saying, " Please, Sir John, there's a poacher in the library, Jenkins and Smith have caught."

" A poacher ! Let's see the rascal ! " " I vote we duck him ! Give him a horse-whipping ! " cried half a dozen voices ; there was a hurrying of feet in the hall, and what seemed a crowd of men in evening dress poured in through the library door. How I hated them ! and I think I must have looked like it ; for they hushed suddenly, and some of their mouths opened.

" What on earth did the idiots bring him here for ? " said a voice in the hall, a voice I knew very well ; and the Helper came into the room.

At once I felt quite safe ; but at the sight of me his face filled with a dismayed surprise, and he cried, " What senseless idiocy have you been up to now,

Jenkins ? ” and came swiftly across the room, with outstretched hand, saying, “ How do you do, Miss Chute ; I hope to goodness my idiots have not annoyed you ? ” Then he turned angrily on the keepers, and said, “ Clear out, you dunderheaded idiots ! ”

“ But, Sir John——” said the keeper.

“ Clear out, will you ! ” roared the Helper furiously, stamping his foot ; and they shuffled out quickly.

Then he turned to his friends and practically drove them back to their game, telling them that he must see me home, and refusing curtly two or three offers to come with him that he might not have to walk back alone. The butler brought his hat and coat ; and in two minutes we were out of the house.

We had not gone ten yards down the drive when I turned on him and said furiously, “ How dare you ! ”

“ How dare I what ? ” he said.

“ You’re—you’re Sir John Baldran ! You’ve been practically giving me all that game we caught ! It was disgraceful of you ! I’m—I’m glad—yes ; I’m glad that I hit you so hard ! ”

He looked at me gravely, and said, “ I’m afraid, my dear Priscilla, that you have a bad temper.”

“ I’m not your dear Priscilla ! How dare you——”

“ Oh, yes, you are. I always think of you as my dear Priscilla,” he said calmly.

“ You’ve no right——”

"Oh, yes, I have," he interrupted again. "You've made me your partner in crime, a poacher; you've bullydamned me continually; you've knocked me down and nearly killed me; with a cold cruelty you've tried to drive me to suicide by denying me the sight of you when you knew I was dying for it. Look what you've cost me in mental, moral, and physical anguish—it gives me every right to call you my dear Priscilla. Emotionally you're the most expensive creature I ever came across; and it was a bad day for me when I met you."

"Well, that will soon be mended! We shan't meet again!" I gasped out, almost choking with rage.

"No; there's no mending it," he said in the saddest voice. "I can't do without you—you're my one extravagance—my dearest Priscilla. You'll have to take pity on me and—beggar me."

It was no use my saying anything; he would only twist my words, I knew that way of his well. We walked on without speaking, and my anger cooled a little. Then, suddenly, he said in a very different voice, "Do be kind to me, Priscilla; you've been cruel so long."

It was not fair. My nerves had been shaken by my capture and that horrible walk with the keepers; the sudden gentleness upset me, and I rather broke down.

We were some time saying good-bye at Blackstead gates, and—well I did not knock him down this time.

As I went up the drive he called after me, " By the way, my dearest Priscilla, I'm going to take a long and severe course of boxing lessons before we're married. So you know."

## THE EPPSTEIN EMERALD

MR. PETER WRIOTHESLEY CARTRELL was not an early riser, though he was in that bloom of youth to which so sterling a practice is appropriate. He came quietly along the corridor very late for breakfast ; and the shining emerald on the toilet-table caught his eye through the open door of the bedroom occupied by Mr. Leopold Eppstein, the Grocer Prince. It was a large emerald, far too large to adorn a cravat, even the cravat of a millionaire. In Mr. Eppstein, however, the love of the gorgeous, natural to a romantic oriental from Frankfort, burned with an uncommon fervour. Even more uncommon was his knack of increasing the apparent size of the emerald by his choice of cravats. It looked much larger among folds of a rich crimson or brave purple than it would have looked among folds of a decorous grey. The Cartrells did not like their guest's emerald. They liked it very well as a stone, indeed, but they did not like it as a scarf-pin ; as a pendant from a necklace they would have found no fault with it. However, Mr. Eppstein was making his first entry into Society under the Cartrell ægis, and he was resolved to enter magnificently.



As the gleam of the emerald caught them, the mild blue eyes of Peter glowed with a sudden fire ; the nostrils of his long, high-bridged nose (the genuine Cartrell nose which had always been a great comfort to his father) dilated after the fashion of those of a war-horse smelling powder, or melinite ; and an amiable smile wreathed his thin, pink lips. He paused, gazing into the bedroom ; then he walked into it, and looked round for the proper hiding-place for the emerald. He did not like practical jokes (his was too kind a heart), but he never lost an opportunity of committing one. With unerring judgment, he chose the bottom drawer of Mr. Eppstein's unlocked jewel-case, dropped the emerald pin into it among the jewelled watch-chains, and shut the drawer. He came out of the bedroom with his face composed to an expression of serene vacuity, humming softly a tune of triumph.

As he came to the bottom of the wonderful Italian staircase, the chief glory of Cartrell Court, a band of guests and his stepmother came babbling out of the dining-room. Peter greeted them urbanely ; then with a sudden, anxious frown, he drew his stepmother aside, and said, " Mamerculus ! The tip of your nose ! "

His stepmother fondly believed Mamerculus to be a pretty diminutive of mamma, and liked it ; she did not know that it was the surname of one of the noblest and probably most robust Romans of them all. Before she could obtain particulars about the condition of the tip of her nose, Peter dashed

away from her to wring the hand of the small, round, rose-pink Mr. Eppstein, and congratulate him on his air of good health. Mr. Eppstein was used to Peter's glad hand. But his close-set eyes, which missed nothing, had observed that its gladness was lavished on no one else. He liked it ; but he had resolved not to lend Peter money.

Peter went into the dining-room, nodded to Colonel Brown, who was sitting beside his sister ; stroked her chestnut hair ; sank into the chair next to her, and said, " Well, old girl, how's the suitor this morning ? "

" It was blue—peacock-blue ! " said Helen Cartrell in the accents of despair.

" I thought he looked rose-pink," said Peter.

" His tie, I mean," said Helen.

" Well, he hadn't got that beastly emerald in it," growled Colonel Brown, who hated Mr. Eppstein with all a rival's hatred ; and his honest, capable face darkened in a scowl.

" He'd only forgotten it. He kept feeling his tie for it all through breakfast ; and he's gone to put it on," said Helen sadly.

" Well, as soon as you're married to him, you'll have to cure him of his colour schemes and bag the emerald," said Peter.

" Don't be a pig ! " cried Helen, her beautiful eyes flashing. " I'm not going to marry that detestable creature ! "

" Oh, yes ; you are," said Peter firmly. " Mamerculus has chosen him for you. And we all do what

Mamerculus ordains. After all, it's entirely your own fault."

"My fault?" cried Helen.

"Yes; you would grow up a beauty, though I warned you against it. Mamerculus is a beauty, too; and there's not room for two beauties in one family. So you have got to go. Also, you've got to go in a way that does credit to her. Millionaires always do credit to their brides' parents. I don't know why."

"I won't marry him!" cried Helen; but there was a lack of conviction in her tone which did not escape Colonel Brown's anxious ear.

"You will. The governor will back up Mamerculus. He has to, poor governor! There's only one chance for you," said Peter.

"One chance?" said Helen.

"Yes. I cannot let you marry a sky-blue tie with a green emerald in it till proper settlements, say two thousand a year, have been made on me. I've not heard a word about them. It's extraordinary!" said Peter. "Perhaps your Eppstein is kicking at my settlements. If he does, I shall not let him have you."

"Mercenary pig!" said Helen.

"No: it's only accepting the inevitable with a good grace," said Peter; and he addressed himself to his breakfast while the two lovers looked at one another ruefully.

"Of course, there's one other chance, though it's a rotten poor one," said Peter, with his mouth full of cold grouse.

"What other chance?" said Helen, with a well-affected carelessness.

"Why, old Lochinvar there"—he nodded towards Colonel Brown—"might pluck up the courage to carry you off in his car before it's too late."

The two lovers looked at one another. The Colonel's eyes began to shine; and a flush gathered on Helen's face. Her eyes refused to meet his.

"You are an uncommon rotter, Peter; but you do talk sense sometimes," said the Colonel warmly.

"Thank you," said Peter, without undue elation.

"I think he talks nonsense always," said Helen; but the flush did not fade.

"Thank you, old girl—thank you," said Peter.

The door opened, and Lady Cartrell came in hurriedly. She fidgeted about the room, pulled a curtain straight, moved a vase of flowers an inch, and kept glancing at Peter who was absorbed, almost greedily, in the act of breakfasting. Her rather sharp features seemed uncommonly mobile that morning, especially her nose. Then she said in a strained voice:

"About my nose, Peter—I can't see anything the matter with it."

"It's the tip," said Peter gravely.

"Well, what's the matter with it?"

"There's a piece of skin on it," said Peter, with his eyes glued to his plate.

A hush fell on the room. Helen's mouth opened; Colonel Brown's mouth opened; they were breathing heavily; and Colonel Brown's face was reddening.

ing, too. Lady Cartrell rubbed the tip of her nose ; she examined it in a mirror. Then she turned and saw the faces of her stepdaughter and Colonel Brown. Her eyes flashed ; she stood staring at the unconscious Peter, clenching and unclenching her hands ; then she said thickly, " Idiot ! " and left the room hastily.

Colonel Brown laughed with the solidarity of a soldier whose simple sense of humour has been touched. Helen laughed softly but happily, and said, " She'll be angry for hours."

" Well, it *was* skin," said Peter, with an injured air. " And anger won't make her worse than usual." Then he added in a tone of quiet content, " But that's why I love my Mamerculus. She's always good for a rise."

As he spoke the door opened, and Lord Cartrell came in, thick, bulky, high-nosed, gloomy, holding his beard firmly with one hand : " I say—this fellow—Eppstein, I mean—says he's lost that d—d—that emerald pin of his ! Is this one of your silly jokes, Peter ? "

Peter sprang to his feet, upsetting his chair, threw up his arms towards the ceiling, and cried, or rather yelled, " At last I've got the chance ! I've always wanted to be a Sherlock Holmes ! Where is he ? Where's Eppstein ? "

And he rushed past his startled father out of the room.

" What's the matter with the young idiot now ? " said Lord Cartrell.

Colonel Brown shook his head. "Goodness knows," he said. "You know what Peter is."

In the middle of the hall stood the Grocer Prince, no longer rose-pink but creamy-white, telling a growing circle of guests of his misfortune.

Peter rushed at him, wrung his hand warmly, and cried, "Never mind, old chap! I'll stand by you! I'll help you! We'll find it!"

Mr. Eppstein tore his hand from Peter's clasp with some petulance, and wailed, "I wouldn't have lost that stone was it ever so! I gave four thousand—*four thousand pound* for that emerald. I value it above everything. It was an heirloom."

A gentle murmur of protest ran round the listening circle.

"I left it on my table; I forgot to put it on; I was late for breakfast," wailed the Grocer Prince. "When I went up to put it on, it had gone. It had been stolen. I shall never see it again."

Peter smote his brow and cried in the triumphant tone of one solving an enigma, "I know! I have it! It's a case of somnambulism! You've swallowed it!"

"Swallowed it?" said Mr. Eppstein blankly.

"Yes. You were anxious to keep it safe. The anxiety weighed on you. You got up in the middle of the night, took the stone out of its setting, and swallowed it for safety. It often happens. We must send for the Rontgen Rays," said Peter.

Lord Cartrell's voice rose high in an earnest adjuration to Peter not to play the fool. Injured

and indignant, deploring the folly of the human race in refusing to be helped, Peter protested that he washed his hands of the matter, and went back to his unfinished breakfast. He left the dining-room door open, however, and heard the interrogations administered to Mr. Eppstein by his stepmother, his father, and half a dozen guests in turn. Then the butler was questioned, then the housekeeper. Between them they made it clear that none of the servants in the process of cleaning had yet gone near Mr. Eppstein's bedroom.

By the time this was done the Grocer Prince was once more his bright organising self. All his being was strung up to the endeavour to recover his lost jewel. He insisted on wiring at once for a detective, to the bitter annoyance of his hosts, who foresaw a wide newspaper publicity, and consequent ironic condolences from their friends. But they could not protest.

Then Peter came out of the dining-room with the suggestion that his father's guests should spend a happy morning searching one another's trunks. The furious outcry, natural in view of the secrets of the fashionable toilet, provoked by the suggestion awoke the darkest suspicions in Mr. Eppstein's breast. He made haste to carry out Peter's next suggestion that he should lock up his bedroom that the detective might find it undisturbed when he came.

The men drifted into the smoking-room, discussing the affair. Peter went with them. Lord Cartrell made no secret of his conviction that it was entirely



the Grocer Prince's own fault for wearing an emerald of that size. That had been the view of Lady Cartrell; and Lord Cartrell always took his wife's view. Then Peter began to enlarge on the danger of circumstantial evidence and its tendency to secure the conviction of innocent persons. By the time he had finished with the theme every man in the room had a strong, but uneasy, feeling that he might become an innocent victim.

"Here, stop grouching about it, Peter," said Lord Cartrell, tugging uneasily at his beard.

Peter looked at him sadly, and said, "It's much better to face the facts, sir. Circumstantial evidence always gathers round the wrong person. You're just as likely to suffer as any one else."

"Don't be an ass!" said Lord Cartrell.

"It would be pretty awful if you were wrongfully convicted," said Peter thoughtfully. "You need a lot of exercise to keep you fit; and the exercise one gets in a prison yard——"

"Here! Get out!" said Lord Cartrell violently.

Peter got out; and Lord Cartrell became aware that his violence had caused some of his guests to gaze at him oddly: his heat seemed suspicious to them. They were in the mood to find anything suspicious. Peter went briskly to a group of ladies discussing the lost emerald on the terrace. At once he began to develop again the theme of circumstantial evidence convicting the innocent. They listened to him with an air that grew more and more startled; and at the end of



his disquisition their voices rose loud in denunciation of Mr. Eppstein.

In the middle of it Peter left them to meet his stepmother coming from the house. "I'm afraid Eppstein's emerald is going to spoil your party, Mamerculus," he said with an air of sympathy.

"Then there won't be anything left for you to do," said Lady Cartrell with asperity.

Peter laughed heartily, and said, "You do say witty things, Mamerculus. But all the same, it's very awkward. You know what circumstantial evidence is. Why, *any one* may be suspected. You weren't down late to breakfast by any chance?"

In a few well-chosen words Lady Cartrell told Peter her opinion of him. From frequent repetition the formula had become practically stereotyped.

Then she said, "It's perfectly disgraceful of Mr. Eppstein to make this fuss! One doesn't ask that kind of person here for this sort of thing."

"You never know where these outsiders are going to have you," said Peter. "Every one's saying you never ought to have had him here."

Lady Cartrell was well aware of it, and she said viciously, "I'll see he doesn't get the chance of behaving like this to any one else. I believe he's stolen the emerald himself—for an advertisement!"

"I wonder what the papers will say," said Peter kindly; and he left her.

On one of the croquet lawns he found Helen and Colonel Brown playing croquet, a very slow game,

since they were so often compelled to stop to discuss with one another the advisability of some quite obvious course of play.

"The suitor is not going at all strong at present," said Peter, taking a slow, luxurious pull at the excellent cigar he was smoking.

Both of them smiled on him kindly.

"So you can countermand the Lochinvar motor car. Which of you was going to hire it?" said Peter, turning their smiles to confusion.

"I do think you're silly!" said Helen.

"Well, well, you needn't blush quite so hard for my silliness, old girl," said Peter; and he strolled on through the shubberies, enjoying the peace of the garden.

When he came back to the Court, he found its atmosphere all that he had desired. His stepmother's guests had been forcing on one another the most elaborate accounts of their movements before breakfast with the intention of averting all possible suspicion from themselves; and they were now at the stage of fixing suspicion on the persons they chanced severally to dislike. Some of them were talking of leaving at once; and they were only prevented from putting the intention into effect by the desire to be on the spot to see some one they disliked proved the thief.

The atmosphere oppressed most deeply Mr. Eppstein. He had, to his own thinking, been making admirable progress in this new exalted circle. He had found himself welcome when he joined any

group of talkers ; and had dispensed to it Stock Exchange tips with a gracious, florid lordliness. He had observed with pleasure that his hearers hung on his lips. Now all this was changed. He was in the position of the wounded animal expelled from the herd. His fellow-guests had come to Cartrell Court to enjoy themselves, not to express sad sympathy with short, round millionaires robbed of emeralds. Moreover, thanks to Peter's disquisition on the danger of circumstantial evidence, he was further shunned as a source of danger. Groups melted when he joined them. Solitary guests tore themselves hurriedly away from him on the flimsiest pretexts. Darker and darker suspicions filled his mind. He saw himself the victim of a plot ; his fellow-guests were in a conspiracy to rob him. He had read many Society stories with a view to obtain information to guide him along the social path. He had learned from them that Society is adventurous and lightfingered. He saw his fellow-guests dividing the proceeds of the sale of his emerald, his beloved emerald. Looking on them in its green light, he became aware that many of them had faces of the criminal type. A great pity for himself filled him ; he felt that it was Eppstein against the world, and he could have wept for the lonely Eppstein.

In this forlorn mood Peter descended on him, bland and sympathetic, but darkling. He pointed out to him that most of his fellow-guests had come down late for breakfast, that several of them were

hard-up. Mr. Eppstein's heart went out to one who shared his suspicions ; and he made no secret of it, or of them. Peter assured him of his vigorous assistance.

Then when they were firmly established in the position of two generous souls united to right the wrong, Peter said, " How would it be to keep an eye on the gates and see that no one sneaks down to the village to send the emerald away by post ? "

" That's a good idea ! " cried Mr. Eppstein ; and without more ado they walked briskly down to the Lodges.

There Peter left him, charging him to stroll up and down with a careless air, and to let no one lure him from his watch on any pretext, assuring him that he would keep his eyes open at the Court.

By way of performing that feat he set about a game of croquet with Sibyl Carstairs, the prettiest of his stepmother's guests. In the middle of it Colonel Brown came on to the lawn, alone and disconsolate, and tactlessly watched them. Lady Cartrell had swooped down on him and carried Helen away. The unkindly deed had soothed her a little.

Presently Peter stepped aside to him, and suggested that he might be kind to Mr. Eppstein. He said he was mooning unhappily about the Lodges ; and painted his forlorn state in affecting terms. Would not the Colonel be a good fellow and bring him back to play a game of billiards ? The Colonel had the heartiest detestation of his rival, but he carried

a kind heart in his huge frame. He said that he would, and strode off down to the Lodges.

There was no one Mr. Eppstein would sooner have suspected than the Colonel, in whom he recognised a serious obstacle to his social advancement by marriage with Helen ; and at the sight of him his heart beat fast. He at once suspected him of trying to sneak away with the emerald ; and when he heard his invitation to come to play billiards, his suspicion became a certainty. It was an attempt to lure him from his watch. He refused the invitation with an ungraciousness which made the very toes of the Colonel's boots itch to kick him. The temptation was so strong that he had to turn on his heel and depart briskly lest he should succumb to it. He came back to Peter and explained with some heat to what extent Mr. Eppstein's loss had brought out his natural offensiveness. Peter condoled with him on his repulse, and some twenty minutes later, at the end of his game, took his way to the Grocer Prince.

Assuming a puzzled air, he said, " You haven't by any chance seen Brown ? "

" Yes, I've seen him," said Mr. Eppstein darkly.

" Um—er—did he try to get you away from your post? Did he suggest a game of billiards? " said Peter reluctantly.

" Yes, he did," said Mr. Eppstein yet more darkly.

" He's been talking to me too. He seemed quite

put out by your refusing," said Peter with a bewildered air.

"I saw through it at once!" cried Mr. Eppstein triumphantly. Then stepping forward, he gripped Peter's arm, fixed him with small, but burning, eyes, and said, "That's the man! He's got my emerald!"

"Oh, come now, you don't think that! Brown's the last man in the world!" Peter protested weakly and unhappily.

"Leopold Eppstein does not think, he knows," said the Grocer Prince with a splendid air.

Peter was plunged in anxious thought, frowning; then he said, "Well, oughtn't you to be keeping an eye on him, instead of watching here, if you're so certain? He might slip away through the Park."

"By Jove, yes! You're right!" said Mr. Eppstein, starting off at full speed up the drive.

Colonel Brown was walking up and down the croquet lawn, still disconsolate. The house had engulfed Helen and seemed unlikely to disgorge her. Mr. Eppstein sat on the bank and watched him with the eyes of a lynx.

Presently the keen, but beady, eyes of the Grocer Prince began to worry the Colonel. The desire came on him to enjoy a lover's self-communing, in the solitary recesses of the garden; and he strolled into the shrubbery. Mr. Eppstein sprang from the bank and followed him with what he knew to be the stealthy gait of a sleuth-hound. He followed him close; the Colonel soon became aware of his

presence, so checking to self-communing, and turned into a path to the right. Mr. Eppstein followed him. The Colonel turned his head; and the watchful glare in Mr. Eppstein's starting eyes assured him that his loss had affected his brain. Mr. Eppstein bethought himself that it was not well that the Colonel should learn that his crime was known; and he began to hum the Micmac waltz, out of tune. The sound did not stimulate a lover's self-communing; and the Colonel turned into a path on the left. Mr. Eppstein followed him.

The Colonel stopped short and said, "Which of these shrubberies do you want to walk in, Mr. Eppstein?"

His tone was uncompromising, and Mr. Eppstein said hastily, "Oh, they're all one to me, Colonel."

"Then I'll walk in the Wellingtonia shrubbery; and you can stop here," said the Colonel with extraordinarily cold courtesy; and he left him.

His tone set Mr. Eppstein's heart fluttering. It confirmed his belief that the Colonel meant to steal away. Yet he dared no longer follow him openly. He danced gently first on one foot, then on the other. Then his resolution stiffened, and he stole through the shrubs till he came among the Wellingtonias and in sight of the Colonel walking up and down between them. With keen eyes he marked the Colonel's changing face, his brow frowning and growing smooth again. He saw plainly that his rival's guilty mind was wrestling with the difficulty



of disposing of the emerald, that now it seemed insuperable, that now he saw the way. He was wrong: the Colonel's facial contortions were due to the fact that he was enjoying a lover's self-communing.

Presently, however, the Colonel was invaded by an uneasy feeling that eyes were on him. He scanned the cedars as he came along; then, with a startling yell, he leapt in among them and extracted the Grocer Prince by the scruff of the neck.

"What do you mean by dogging me and spying on me, you little bounder?" roared the Colonel, shaking him.

"I—I wasn't!" squeaked Mr. Eppstein.

"Then what were you doing?" roared the Colonel.

"I—I was bird-nesting!" cried Mr. Eppstein.

"Then go and bird-nest somewhere else!" roared the Colonel; and he flung Mr. Eppstein violently from him in a northerly direction.

Mr. Eppstein alighted on his hands and knees with a howl, for with unerring accuracy he had struck with his left knee the only pebble on the grassy sward. He rose swiftly, and in objurgatory vein danced out of the shrubbery. He hobbled straight off in search of Lord Cartrell, and came into the smoking-room with a stern, determined air. His host's face did not glow with joy at the sight of him.

"I've found the thief," said Mr. Eppstein sternly.



"Thank goodness! Then we can cut the beastly business short. Who is it?" said Lord Cartrell, springing eagerly to his feet.

"Colonel Brown," said Mr. Eppstein.

Lord Cartrell's eyes opened, and his mouth; his nostrils dilated; a slow, deep flush suffused all of his large, square face that was not bearded. He swayed on his feet, and wrung his hands. Mr. Eppstein marked his shocked amazement with a grim smile.

"You thundering little idiot!" howled Lord Cartrell, finding his voice. "Brown? A V.C.! My own cousin! A man with five thousand a year! You—you—you miserable jackass!"

"It's him! It might have been sudden temptation! I've evidence—lots of it!" cried Mr. Eppstein hastily.

"I—I'll break every bone in your body!" howled Lord Cartrell, reaching blindly for the poker.

Mr. Eppstein fled with the speed, though hardly the grace, of Atalanta; his host sank gasping into an easy chair.

Lunch was a bitter feast. Mr. Eppstein's emerald might have weighed tons, so heavily did it crush the spirits of the house-party. Every one was burning to talk of it; no one could in the glowering presence of its injured owner. Except Peter—Peter kept bursting into his disquisition on the conviction of the innocent by circumstantial evidence. Every time his father or his stepmother

cut it short by a violent adjuration to him to talk of something else. His outbursts had the effect of driving his stepmother to the uttermost limit of exasperation. It was useless to try to vent it on Peter, who was proof against malediction and abuse. She vented it therefore on Mr. Eppstein, and conveyed to him her opinion of his conduct in being robbed of the emerald with such clearness that by the end of lunch he was yearning, with a cold ferocity, to consign hosts and fellow-guests alike to the icy seclusion of one of His Majesty's gaols.

After lunch Lady Cartrell retired to her bedroom with a natural, but violent, headache. She could therefore give no attention to the matter of keeping Helen and Colonel Brown apart; and in a sequestered corner of the garden they made what hay they could while the sun shone. The burning Eppstein, by now obsessed by a fixed idea of the Colonel's guilt, kept an unwavering eye on them from a bosky lair forty yards away. Aided by Peter's kindly imagination, the other guests discussed with a strained, feigned lightness of spirit the inclemencies of penal servitude. Now and again they broke into a chorus expressive of what they really thought of Mr. Eppstein.

At half-past three Mr. Eppstein was withdrawn from his bosky lair by shouts of his name. The detective had come. Mr. Eppstein hurried to his side, his face glowing with exultant expectation of coming triumph. The guests gathered round

them, save such of them as hurried to their bedrooms to conceal amplifications of tresses and other secrets of the toilet in such hiding-places as caught their fancy.

Mr. Eppstein and the detective headed the procession which mounted the stairs to Mr. Eppstein's bedroom. The detective was a fair, moustachioed man, well-grown and heavy, standing firmly on large, but flat, feet. His face was instinct with a bovine solidity of intelligence rare in people who make their living in London. He inspired confidence in the weak.

He followed Mr. Eppstein into the bedroom ; and Peter followed him. Lord Cartrell stopped on the threshold, his guests in a semicircle behind him, staring into the room. The detective's eyes rolled slowly round it. It was exactly as Mr. Eppstein had left it, still showing signs of his hasty toilet ; half a bushel of bright, attractive cravats were heaped on the toilet-table.

The detective gazed round the room for a full minute in silence ; they hung on his lips. Then he said with the profound air of a ruminant, " There ain't much chance of the criminal's 'aving left anythink be'ind 'im, sir."

" Still a systematic search ? " said Peter.

" Yus ; it's a form we always goes through," said the detective.

The detective went through it ; and Mr. Eppstein kept saying, " I've looked there—I've looked there. The pin isn't there."

Three times the detective paused in his task to say, "It ain't the pin I'm a-looking for."

He found no trace of the thief, and was about to leave the room when Peter said to the Grocer Prince, "Are you quite sure you didn't put it away in this jewel-case?" And he prodded that object with his forefinger.

"Quite sure. It's no good wasting time with that. I locked it as soon as I found that the emerald had been stolen; and I've had the keys in my pocket ever since," said Mr. Eppstein.

"Did you look through it?" said Peter, and he prodded it again.

"Why should I look through it? I've told you the pin was on the table!" snapped Mr. Eppstein.

"You'd certainly better look through it," said Lord Cartrell aggressively. "A man who's idiot enough to suspect Brown is idiot enough for anything."

"Oo's this 'ere Brown," said the detective quickly.

"He's the V.C., and my cousin—a man with five thousand a year," said Lord Cartrell, with painstaking distinctness and twitching nostrils.

"'E's the V.C., is 'e?" said the detective in a tone of grave doubt; and he paused. Then he said, "Well, you'd better just turn out the jool-case, sir."

With every appearance of warm impatience Mr. Eppstein unlocked the jewel-case, opened it, and displayed two trays full of jewelled pins, studs, and

buttons. Then he drew out the drawer full of watch-chains ; and the gleaming emerald sparkled up at his astounded eyes.

“ Why ? What ? How ? How did it get here ? ” he gasped ; and horror and amazement struggled for the possession of his mottling face.

“ Look here ! ” cried Lord Cartrell in a rising voice. “ Do you mean to say you’ve made this infernal fuss—upset the house—annoyed everybody—accused Brown of theft—and your beastly pin was here all the time ? What do you mean by it, sir ? What the devil do you mean by it ? ” He ended in a roar ; and indignant outcries broke from the uncomfortable, yet disappointed, guests around the threshold.

“ I—I can’t think ! I never put it there ! Swelp me, I never did ! ” cried Mr. Eppstein.

The veins stood thick on Lord Cartrell’s purple brow as he ploughed through his guests, as through a football scrimmage, to the head of the staircase, and roared down it, “ Jackson ! Jackson ! Order a carriage to take Mr. Eppstein to the station ! Send up his man to pack at once ! At once, do you hear ? Do you think I want to be standing here all day ? ”

He was not really standing ; he was dancing heavily.

“ Really, Eppstein, you ought to be more careful,” said Peter in a tone of cold disapproval ; and he left the perspiring Grocer Prince mopping his brow in the full enjoyment of the feelings of a man who

has kicked away the ladder by which he is climbing before he has reached its top.

Peter drew Colonel Brown down the stairs with him after his panting father, and said briskly, "Now's your time! Strike while the iron's hot! Ask the governor's consent now. He'll be dying to take it out of Mamerculus for this upset. Eppstein was *her* friend."

"Right you are!" said the Colonel with equal briskness; and he followed Lord Cartrell to the smoking-room.

Lord Cartrell received him with an air of savage gloom. "I suppose you want me to apologise for the fellow," he growled. "I can't think what my wife wants with such outsiders in the house."

But when he heard the Colonel's business, his face slowly brightened. His infatuation for his wife was for the moment in eclipse; he was burning to go contrary to her dearest wishes; and he gave his consent with a grim joy. Lady Cartrell came down to tea, her headache banished by the discovery of the emerald and the departure of its owner, to learn that her guests had already overwhelmed the lovers with good wishes, and the thoughtful Peter had wired the tidings of their engagement to the *Morning Post*.

## THE HEROIC POLLY

OF all children Polly was the reddest-haired, and the most unfortunate. All lifeless things seemed leagued to work her mischief : the ship for ever lurched to throw her against anything newly tarred or painted ; the nail, where no nail should have been, for ever tore her clothes ; a slippery deck, or a coil of rope, for ever tripped her that she might fall with her hand on a splinter. She was unfortunate, moreover, in her mother, who had died by accident : in her father, an Irishman, an unlucky digger, and a drunkard ; and in her upbringing, the rough training of the mining camp, where courage was the only virtue, straight shooting the only accomplishment : beyond any girl-child ever born she possessed both. Man, indeed, tried to make amends to her for outrageous fortune : Jack had grown expert in removing paint and tar from human skin ; I had grown expert in extracting splinters from her hands ; the Captain had learned to plaster her scratches better than any doctor ; and never did the ship sail over an easy sea, but one of an idle watch was mending a rent in one of Polly's frocks.

Now, on the *Golden Hope*, that cruise, we needed all our luck. There was nothing wrong with the

ship, indeed, a clipper, and good for fifteen knots on a fair wind. But she was short-handed, and manned at that with the scum of the seaports ; for with the fire of the gold-fever in his veins, what man would stick to seafaring who could buy a pick ? Worse still, she carried gold-dust ; Jack and I had a hundred thousand dollars apiece in notes ; and when we came to breakfast the first morning—we had gone aboard in the dark—we found James Withstraw sitting at the table. Of all the gamblers on the Pacific slope Thin Jim, as they called him, for his thin face, thin hands, and thin body, had the worst name. There where you killed your enemy as you could, with warning, or without, the feeling among the hardest men was, that at play, at shooting, or with the knife, James Withstraw never gave his man a chance ; and we knew that he was on the *Golden Hope* for the gold. We took his presence coolly enough, we had been in tight places before ; but when we went on deck, we skinned our eyes, and a pretty sight met them. The crew were rascals plain enough, and among the broken diggers lounging on the fore-deck we recognised three of the worst scum of Cringle's Gulch, where we had first met James Withstraw.

We looked at one another, and I saw Jack's jaw set : " Thin Jim holds both bowers," he said.

We had held the dust once or twice at the price of men's lives, and it seemed that we might have to hold the notes at the same price. Then Polly came dancing down the deck with her blue eyes alight,



and her face like a white flower, and we forgot Thin Jim, and the dollars, and our throats. Before night we had squared her father and the Captain ; and Polly, instead of berthing for'ard with that digger crowd, was a cabin passenger with a state-room of her own.

The days wore on ; the *Golden Hope* ploughed through a level sea ; we yarned and gambled with the officers ; we played with Polly, we talked with Polly, and we comforted Polly in her many afflictions ; we were as civil to Thin Jim as we could bring ourselves to be ; but night and day we watched continually. He never showed his hand. He talked to the crew and the diggers no more than Jack and I ; and for anything their faces told, as they talked, they might have been speaking of albatrosses. Then came Polly's luck ; and it was battle, and murder, and sudden death.

We were playing euchre on the quarter-deck, Thin Jim, Jack, and I. The *Golden Hope* met one of those waves from nowhere one meets in mid-ocean, pitched and lurched. Polly, who had just come aft, lost her footing, rolled down the sloping deck ; upset the empty barrel that served us for card-table ; and scattered the cards in a fluttering shower.

Withstraw snatched her to her feet ; his face went white with rage ; and he slapped her cruelly with all the force of his long thin hand before I could catch her from him, and send him and his chair flying with my foot. He crashed into the scuppers,

was on his feet in a trice, whipped out his knife, and jumped at me. Cumbered with the child, I stood a poor chance; but Jack's sharp "Hands up!" and revolver stopped him short; and he stood pouring forth a stream of curses on the three of us, in a tremble of raging helplessness

"Hold your tongue!" cried Jack.

His tone brought silence; and while I soothed poor little Polly, on whose white cheeks the brute's fingers had branded themselves in bright scarlet, Thin Jim got his rage under control, and put away his knife. The child quivered and shook with trying to check her streaming tears; but the stinging pain would not be denied, and forced the tears from her eyes and the sobs from her throat.

Withstraw came forward, mumbling excuses, smiling greasily, but his shifty eyes still shone with an ugly light, and his lips were a-twitch.

"Git!" I said in a snarl, and lifted Polly in my arms, with her face against my shoulder; for I thought that the shame at being seen by us to cry might be hurting her as much as the slaps. The racking shaking stopped; and in the comforting darkness the sobs came freely and eased her.

Jack picked up the cards slowly, righted the barrel, and began a long yarn about the doings of some road-agents; I kept asking him questions to get it clearer; Thin Jim had gone forward; the sobs came fainter and fainter. Presently they fell quiet; Polly slipped out of my arms on to the deck, shook her red curls over her tear-stained face to

hide it, and sat down with her elbows on her knees, her face resting on her hands, the position she seemed to find most easy for talking. She was silent awhile, and we waited on her pleasure; then she began in her gentle, drawling voice that always rang so pleasant, "I'm durned sorry I spoiled yer game, boys. I couldn't help it, though, could I?"

"Of course you couldn't; don't you trouble about it," said Jack cheerfully.

"All the same, that Jim is a mean skunk; and ef I'd had a gun, I'd hev wiped him out." I saw her eyes flash through the veil of her hair; and I believed it.

"I wish you had," said Jack. "I guess we shouldn't have worn mourning long."

"Why didn't you drop him in his tracks? You had him covered," she said.

"Well, you see, he hadn't a gun," said Jack.

"You Britishers are too durned high-falutin—waitin' for Thin Jim to get out his gun!" said Polly, with measured scorn.

"Britisher yourself!" said Jack. "At any rate, Frank tickled his scalp in the scuppers."

"Yes, an' first chance he'll plug Frank through the back of his head. I'll hev to luk after him myself, I guess; and anyways, I've got to get even with the mean skunk," said Polly, and her eyes flashed again.

"Good luck to your shooting then," said Jack.

Eight bells struck; I picked up Polly and carried her down to the door of her cabin. She was

quick bathing her face and arranging her hair ; and when Thin Jim came down, still black and sulky, she was sitting at the table, and greeted him with a scowl. In the middle of helping the soup, the Captain stopped short and said, " Why—what in thunder is that red hand on the child's face ? "

Polly's face flushed all one scarlet ; and Thin Jim at his politest said quickly, " Polly was very clumsy, and I corrected her. I am afraid I was rather severe. The fact is, I lost my temper."

The Captain, too, was short-tempered, and the less likely to excuse it in another man. Besides, though he never petted the child, I had seen that he had a quick eye for her wants at table, and that the titbits were always on Polly's plate. He burst out, " Temper be——" caught himself up for the child—" I'll have no such doings on my ship ; I'll have none of your longshore tricks here, no knocking children about here ! Who the"—he caught himself up again—" who are you, sir, to go correcting my passengers ? You'll get corrected yourself with a belaying-pin if I've any more of it ! "

" I didn't pay for a cabin passage to travel with a digger's brat," snarled Withstraw.

" If you give me any of your insolence you'll travel in irons, as sure as my name's John Trail ! " roared the Captain.

Withstraw swallowed his rage. Polly gazed at his discomfited air with the gentle smile of a seraph, and said with fine dignity, " Don't trouble about

me, Captain ; I guess I kin play a lone hand all right."

" You eat your soup, missy, or I'll have to put you in irons next," said the Captain gruffly.

Polly was silent ; Withstraw sulked ; Jack talked to the Captain and the first mate fitfully ; the storm still hung on the air. As soon as dinner came to an end, Withstraw and the mate went on deck ; and presently Polly, who seemed gloomy, stole away after him.

" I don't like that man," said the Captain.

" You'll like him less before you've done with him," I said.

" There's something wrong, somewhere, and I shouldn't wonder if he's at the bottom of it. There's too much whispering in corners on this ship for me," said the Captain.

Jack told him briefly what we suspected : it was the first time we had had a reason for telling him.

" Well," he said at the end, " they'll do nothing this side of the continent. Ships have to be sailed."

The three of us settled down to euchre. The wind had fallen very light, the sun blazed down, and the silence on deck was only broken now and again by a creaking of the yards. We had played for an hour, stopping at whiles to yarn, when there came a pattering down the companion-ladder, and Polly burst clumsily into the cabin. It was so unlike her usual neat fashion of moving that we stopped playing to look at her. She leaned back against the door, panting : her white face could not pale, but I saw

that her scarlet lips were a faint pink ; and gasped out, " Boys—they're—goin' ter cut yer throats—you'll hev to be smart ! "

Jack and I were on our feet, with our revolvers cocked, before she had finished.

" Steady, gentlemen ! Steady, please ! " said the Captain quietly. " Tell us all about it, Polly."

" I was goin' right for'ard," she began, still panting. " I wanted ter think it right out. As I was goin' past the fo'c'sle I heard Thin Jim talkin'—an' I stopped to hear what he mout be doin' down thar. He was speakin' low at first, an' then he says quite loud, ' You understand, then, at four bells you'll rush aft, an' shoot straight. I'll take the Captain myself.' "

The Captain rose very slowly, took a revolver from a locker, and put it in his pocket ; and then said, " Now, gentlemen, this is serious. But we've got an hour. There's us three, and the two mates. We want more. The carpenter's a good man : he's sailed with me before. The bo's'n and the hands I won't answer for ; but three or four of those digger men are all right. That's nine, at any rate——"

" And me," said Polly.

" You'll stay in this cabin, whatever happens," I said firmly.

" I won't—I won't ! " cried Polly in a sudden heat of passion.

" Yes, you will, missy ! " said the Captain sharply ; and Polly's anger faded to a woebegone misery.

"But the difficulty is to get together," said the Captain. "Come on deck, gentlemen, and let us see how it is to be done."

We went on deck, and looked forward. The ship was very quiet: the watch were in the bows; three of the diggers, Polly's father among them, were playing cards in the waist; and Wrain and Thomas, the two mates, were looking over their game. Thin Jim was nowhere to be seen.

The Captain thought for a while, and then said quickly, "I have it! Pass the word for'ard for the carpenter, Mr. Thomas!" he bawled to the second mate.

When the carpenter came, he said, "I want you to rig me up an awning, Mr. Wilson. Hi! you digger men, will you lend a hand here for a bottle of rum? I'm short-handed; and this is a landsman's job."

The carpenter went forward for his tools; the diggers put up their cards and sauntered aft; and the two mates followed them. The men in the bows took no notice, and two of them helped the carpenter bring his tool-chest aft. When they had set it down, and gone for'ard, the Captain stopped talking about the awning, and said, "Now my lads, we're in a hole. Do you want your throats cutting?"

"Not me, begorra!" said Polly's father.

"I thought there'd be trouble, when I seed Thin Jim aboard," said the second digger. The third whistled softly.

" Well, they're going to be cut at four bells," said the Captain ; " And it'll take all you can do to stop it. Are your revolvers loaded ? "

They nodded.

" Well you'd better reload them. Most likely some one has spoiled the cartridges. Can you load revolvers, missy ? " said the Captain, turning to Polly.

" Yes," said Polly.

" Then go down and get a box of cartridges, and we'll hand the revolvers to you one at a time. It won't do to let any one for'ard see what we're about. You, Mr. Wrain, go down and get yourself a revolver, and bring up one for Mr. Wilson, loaded, mind ; and the rest of you set about this awning job as though you hadn't a thought else on your mind. If there's any surprising to be done, we'll do it ourselves. See ? "

The Captain was as brisk and cheerful as if he were arranging a picnic. Polly went eagerly below ; Wrain followed her ; the diggers fell to work gaily : they had had too rough a time of it to be taken aback at the thought of a little shooting. The mates and carpenter were provided with revolvers, and those of the diggers were reloaded. The minutes dragged on very slowly.

Half an hour before the time the crew began to come on deck from the fo'c'sle ; they did not seem to have any spirit to talk ; they just hung about and looked uneasy. At about ten minutes to the four bells I took Polly below, almost by force ;



and as soon as the cabin door was shut she broke down, and began to cry, wailing softly, " You might let me stay on deck, oh, you might ! I guess I could wipe out one or two of them, I could."

" Now, Polly," I said soothingly, " we all know you're as brave as a lion. But you can't take a hand in this game. We should all be looking after you instead of shooting straight ; don't you see ? "

Polly refused to be comforted. She sat down, laid her arms on the table, her head in her arms, and sobbed, " Yes, I see thet. You needn't ; but you would, and it's durned hard, it is."

Then a horrid thought flashed on me : if we failed, and the child were left to those scoundrelly blackguards.

" My God ! " I muttered, and my voice caught.

" Look here, Polly ! " I said. " Here's my knife. Now if we go under, we shan't be able to see after you. So, promise me, that when they start breaking in the door, you'll drive it into your left side, just where your heart beats. You must, dear."

The child raised a piteous face, and tried hard to set her quivering lips. " I will," she said. " I will ; honour. But—I hed rather take it fighting—with you."

" We ain't dead yet, dear," I said as cheerfully as I might. " Give me a kiss for luck."

I bent down ; she threw her arms round my neck and pressed her lips to mine ; then let me go, and buried her face in her hands, her thumbs thrust into her ears.

I slipped out, locked the door, and put the key in my pocket : only a locked door could have kept Polly from the fight.

When I came on deck I found that a strange hush had fallen on the ship, and that I alone perceived it : the others, their minds tense with waiting, did not notice it. They were all still, too : the men round the carpenter in strained positions over their work, the mutineers gathered in the waist, in strained attitudes of affected ease. In another moment they might have seen it and been warned, when I made a poor joke in a loud voice, and eased the strain. There was a dry, husky laugh on the quarter-deck, and I saw a kind of relaxing ripple run through the crowd in the waist. Then the silence fell heavy again ; and we moved into two groups, one on either side of the companion-way. For the last minute or two the silence was like a grip round the body.

" Four bells, Mr. Byles ! " the Captain called to the bo's'n, who was taking the watch ; and one of the hands stepped to the bell. I swear I heard his bare feet fall on the deck : and there came the faint clicks of cocking revolvers.

At the first stroke of the bell, heartening themselves with a screeching yell, the mutineers rushed aft ; but of the fight I know little. I remember emptying my revolver as fast as I could into the thick of them ; seeing men drop, and the rush waver ; knowing somehow that on the other side Thin Jim had shot the Captain, and driven the true

men back ; finding myself in the centre of the quarter-deck in the midst of a tumbling, cursing, shooting, stabbing crowd. Then came a blinding flash that split into all the stars that ever shone, and I went down, clubbed.

I was next aware of a voice coming very faintly, as it seemed, from miles away.

"Give him another bucketful or two, boys," it said.

Then I was aware, faintly, that some one was drenching me with water ; then, of a sudden, I came to my senses. My head ached that I could scarce open my eyes ; and when I did, the dazzle of sunlight closed them with a fresh, racking pang. As it passed, I opened them again, and saw Thin Jim sitting on a chair facing me ; Jack lay behind it, face downward, in a pool of blood, the carpenter's axe clenched in his hand ; further away lay a huddle of corpses.

"Oh, ho, my fine English gentleman, you're alive again, are you ! Just pass a rope round him, boys ; he might run away," said Thin Jim, with a sneering chuckle ; and I saw that he was in a bitter rage, and cold after the fight.

I lay propped up against the bulwarks ; and two of the hands heaved me up, ran a rope round me under the arms, and bound me standing to the shrouds. With myself and Thin Jim they seemed the only living men on the *Golden Hope*.

"Now, my friend," he said, when they had done, "I'm going to pay my just debts. I'm going to

teach you not to be so handy kicking over a gentleman in his chair. I should hev been content to wipe you out nicely with a bullet or a knife, but you and your pard hev spoiled my game, and I'm going to flog you first and hang you afterwards. I'll cut you to ribands ; thin, narrow ribands !” He shrieked it out in a sudden frenzy, fell quiet again, and went on. “ Twist him round, boys, and let him view the fine marine scenery while we lick the life out of him.”

As they stepped grinning to my side I saw, over his shoulder, Polly's head come out of the cabin skylight on the further side ; and as they began to loosen the rope I stopped breathing to watch her writhe and twist her body through it. All their backs were turned to her.

She twisted out, and slipped softly on deck. Then she clambered back on to the skylight with a revolver in her hand, rose on the edge, poised herself on firm feet, and her wild eyes went steady as she levelled it. “ Crack ! ” and the man on my right spun round and pitched forward. “ Crack ! ” and the man on my left dropped in a gurgling heap. The barrel came to the level of Thin Jim, and then came Polly's luck. The trigger fell with an empty click : the other chambers had been discharged.

Thin Jim sprang on to the skylight, the child leaped down and fled. He was too quick for her, caught her by the hair, shook her like a rat, dragged her along struggling with all her might, and sat down in his chair, panting and trembling : the last

peril had shattered his strained nerves. I had always sized the man up a coward.

"So, so"—he began in an uneven voice—"so, so—I'll—I'll—I'll cut your throat first, anyhow, you little devil!" He broke into a curious, quavering laugh that rose to a scream, for all the world like a hysteric girl, and I saw a mad drunkenness of cruelty come upon the man. He ripped out his knife, thrust the child between his knees, forced her down till the back of her head lay across his thigh, and I could see the line on her throat where the whiter skin had been shielded by her frock from the sun.

"Quiet, you little devil! Quiet!" he cried, as the child struggled with furious, desperate eyes; and he struck her with the knife-haft on the mouth, so that the blood spurted from her cut lips.

"Look! my fine gentleman! look!" he cried. "The paper's ruled! ruled!" and he lightly scratched the sunburn's edge with the knife-point, leaving a thin red line, and screamed and choked with that beastly mad laughter.

I saw a quiver run through the child at the knife-point's touch; and I burst into a storm of cursing, straining at the rope with cracking muscles.

Slowly behind Thin Jim rose a dreadful, scarlet face; the carpenter's axe swung through the air, and came down plumb in the middle of his head. I've never heard finer music than the crunch.

The man, the child, and the chair fell in a heap; and Jack, for it was Jack, tumbled on to his hands,

gasped, "My pile—Polly," rolled over, and was still.

Presently Polly struggled to her feet, shakily picked up Thin Jim's knife and cut me loose ; and we stood, she and I, alone alive, on the deck of the *Golden Hope*.

## MRS. BUSBY-GLAISHER'S AWAKENING

MRS. BUSBY-GLAISHER was large and square and red, with the jaw of a mastiff. She believed that she had a majestic presence. She was wrong : it was terrific. She was that somewhat uncommon type, a woman with a ruling passion ; and her passion was the domination of Pringle Hill, the suburb she adorned. To this domination, to her the central fact of life, she would, and did, sacrifice everything. She would crush any one who opposed it by any means she could devise : did her natural gift of bullying fail, she would betake herself firmly to slander ; and the anonymous letter was a weapon she loved.

Her great wealth, inherited from her father, a gentleman who had made his fortune out of whole-sale, *not* retail, tailoring, by his consistent support of the immense sweating industry of the East End of London, gave her social prestige among her less wealthy neighbours ; her truculence and tenacity did the rest. She was not an intelligent woman, but she was single-minded. She could see Mrs. Busby-Glaisher and the universe ; but Mrs. Busby-Glaisher bulked so much the bigger and more

important of the two that it never seemed worth her while to take the universe into account ; and she refrained from taking it into account.

She always saw herself clearly as the Lady Bountiful of Pringle Hill, a majestic presence, beneficent, firm, infallible. She fondly believed that Pringle Hill saw her with like eyes, for it was impossible for her to conceive that any one could see her differently. She must, indeed, have been removed from the common run of women, for the continuous, boiling procession of servants, who passed rapidly through her firmly ordered household, one and all declared that they had never come across any one like her.

She tried to believe that she ruled her husband with the thoroughness with which she ruled her suburb and her household, but was sometimes annoyed by a doubt about it. He never opposed her. He never dissented from any of the opinions of which she delivered herself with such constancy and noise on the three evenings in the week he dined at home. Indeed, he received them in a silence so unbroken that a casual observer might have doubted whether he received them at all, whether his mind was not still occupied with the chemical problems which exercised it during the day in his South Kensington laboratory. She was convinced of his profound admiration for the graces and strength of her character. She never repented having forced him to marry her when, at the very moment at which she was in utter despair



of bracing any one to that heroic feat, he had accidentally compromised her at the Bath Hotel at which they chanced to be staying. The frequent mention of his name in the papers as the maker of new chemical discoveries, or as reading important papers to scientific societies, swelled her social importance at Pringle Hill. But the unpleasant fact remained that on more than one occasion during their married life he had had his way when it had not been hers.

There was the matter of their name. When she had prefixed her maiden name of Busby to Glaisher, hyphenated the two into one, and called on him to adopt it, he had refused. At the end of the purple outburst with which she had received his refusal, he had said that the change would harm him in the estimation of his colleagues and impair his usefulness. In spite of six months' nagging, bullying, and abuse, he had remained firm in his determination.

He had shown no less firmness in limiting their intercourse to dinner on three evenings in the week ; and as soon as that dinner was over he went to his study and stayed there. On other evenings he came back from town by the 11.50. She had suspected him of amusing himself with his friends ; but after months of spying, personal, and through private detectives, she had satisfied herself that he really did spend his evenings in his laboratory, alone, or with enthusiastic colleagues and pupils, and abandoned the practice in some disappointment at not having

made a discovery which would have given her a perpetual hold over him.

Her assurance of his admiration of her character rested on the fact that four times during their seven years' married life he had said, "You are a remarkable woman, Elaine."

In some people his manner of saying it might have awakened distrust. But, mentally at any rate, Mrs. Busby-Glaisher enjoyed much of the splendid impenetrability of the rhinoceros; and though she had heard of the existence of irony, she had never personally observed it.

Her domination of Pringle Hill was at its doubtfully beneficent height when Colonel Carteret, an uncle of Mr. Glaisher, died, leaving his only child, a daughter, in very poor circumstances. As soon as Mrs. Busby-Glaisher, in following her usual practice of opening and reading Mr. Glaisher's letters—she enjoyed her full share, if not more, of womanly curiosity—learnt this, nothing would content her but that the girl should make her home with them. To have a colonel's daughter dependent on her bounty would add to her social importance. Her husband did not welcome the suggestion; but she overbore his resistance with an extraordinary violence, a furious vehemence. She did not, however, oppose him when he proposed that he should pay for the girl's maintenance; for her father, the late Mr. Busby, a model business parent, had not been so careless of her well-being as to neglect to cultivate carefully the strong tendency to greed

she had inherited from him, so that she was apt to display a very discreditable parsimony in money matters. On these terms, therefore, Mary Carteret came to live at the Oleanders.

Mrs. Busby-Glaisher had never seen Mary, for her husband had never put himself about to bring his wife and his people together ; and the girl proved a disappointment. She was not at all what Mrs. Busby-Glaisher had expected a colonel's daughter to be. She was a pretty girl, and charming ; but Mrs. Busby-Glaisher found that she lacked style. She was not noisy enough ; her simple gowns and quiet manners did not sufficiently impress Pringle Hill. Another of Mary's disappointing qualities was a needless and exaggerated admiration of Mr. Glaisher. It seemed that she and her father had followed his distinguished career with the liveliest interest. Mrs. Busby-Glaisher could not disguise from herself the fact that Mary regarded him as a far more important person than the queen of Pringle Hill. This was to wound her tenderest susceptibilities ; she was not long making her displeasure felt with her usual violence ; and Mary's life was soon something of a burden to her.

Mary made shift to bear her bullying as easily as might be. Her chief endeavour was to prevent Mr. Glaisher from finding out that she was unhappy, for she did not think it right that his mind should be troubled and diverted from its work by the trivial happenings in his home. But his mind was not at ease about her ; and by way of lighten-

ing for her the gloom with which Mrs. Busby-Glaisher's purple presence filled the Oleanders, he fell into the way of coming home oftener to dinner, doubtful, indeed, that he could brighten life for the girl, but reckoning that his presence would prevent his wife from being quite so much her true self, at any rate at that meal. His efforts to make small talk for Mary were somewhat pathetic in their hopeful futility. But presently she began rather timidly to ask him questions about his work. Soon he fell into the way of jumping at the chance which enabled him to talk without tiresome effort ; and then he found that she could listen intelligently, and had a very fair idea of the results he had already attained. They fell into the way of talking freely about his work ; and he would tell her of the slow progress during the day of the experiment in hand. Mrs. Busby-Glaisher often laughed heartily at the idea of Mary's understanding a word of what he was saying ; but he found that she did, and talked on. Then his wife grew resentful that she no longer had the monopoly of the conversation at her own dinner-table. Whenever she asserted herself and dwelt at length upon some important event in the social life of Pringle Hill, Mary and her husband fell silent, and plainly were uninterested. Once or twice the spirit moved her to tell them her opinion of this behaviour ; and she told it with her wonted violence, abusively. Mary was shocked beyond measure ; she realised what Mr. Glaisher's home life had been ; and she was filled with the sincerest pity for him. It

seemed so unfair that a man whose patient work had been so useful to the world should be discouraged by such a home, and chained to this virulent creature.

Now Mr. Glaisher was a very handsome man : his endurance of his wife had given him a longsuffering air which was quite indistinguishable from romantic melancholy. It was hardly possible for a nice woman to pity him without taking the next step ; and it is to be feared that Mary was not long taking it. On the other hand, his Elaine's intrusion into his life had robbed Mr. Glaisher of its chief joy ; he had never had his chance of love. Mary, with her beauty and charm, could hardly fail to awaken passion in any man who chanced to be brought into as intimate intercourse with her as he was ; and her gentleness and intelligence were bound to make the strongest appeal to one who had had seven years' experience of Mrs. Busby-Glaisher's decisive character. But he did not know what love was ; and Mary, having spent so retired a life with her father, was hampered by an equal ignorance. In this innocence they both allowed themselves to acquire an extreme liking for the other's society. Presently, indeed, both of them began to find themselves invaded by an odd restlessness when they were apart ; Mr. Glaisher came home to dinner every day ; and if by any chance he was prevented from doing so, Mary was as keenly disappointed as he was himself.

To this interesting state of things Mrs. Busby-

Glaisher was quite blind ; she had far too great a contempt for Mary, and in her heart of hearts for her husband, too, to observe them with any attention. They were not persons of any real importance in the social life of Pringle Hill. She had no chance therefore of telling them, violently, where they were ; and they only guessed dimly their whereabouts when one day Mr. Glaisher, without thinking what he was doing, gave Mary a cousinly kiss. Her vivid blush and the delightful thrill that ran through him set him wondering. He set about applying his admirably trained scientific mind to the phenomenon, and to the kindred phenomena awakened in him by the coming of spring, a curious exaltation and vague yearnings which haunted him with a troublesome, but not unpleasant, persistence. He consulted his friend the President of the Psychological Society about them ; and he said that there could be but little doubt that Mr. Glaisher was in love, a verdict which confirmed Mr. Glaisher's own uncomfortable suspicion.

At first Mr. Glaisher was much distressed by the unfortunate occurrence. Then, since his pleasant exaltation refused to abate, he made up his mind that he might as well take his joy of it, the joy of which his wife had robbed him. There was no reason in the world why Mary, who was, of course, incapable of feeling an answering passion for a man of forty-two, twenty years older than herself, should ever dream that he loved her ; and no one could suffer but himself. Cheered by this decision, with a most

delightful resurgence of youth, he went to his tailor and ordered several new suits of clothes of a youthful pattern which caused his tailor to look him up in "Who's Who" under the impression that he had been mistaken in supposing him married. Also, Mr. Glaisher was careful to let slip no chance of kissing Mary, whenever their kinship seemed to demand it. His appetite for those kisses did not at all abate by being fed.

Mary lacked his scientifically trained mind; she accepted the thrill which ran through her when he kissed her, as something in the nature of cousinship, and she did not analyse it with the care and patience he had devoted to the matter. And if she had, the President of the Psychological Society was not a friend of hers, and she could have obtained no confirmation of any result of that analysis. On the other hand, her womanly instinct gave her a certain keenness in matters of the heart; and presently she made the discovery that Jack—inappropriate as the name was to his scientific reputation, she had come to think of Mr. Glaisher always as Jack—was in love with her. The discovery was a good deal of a shock to her; but on further consideration she could not find it in her to blame him for the indiscretion. Indeed, it seemed probable that it had been an accident. Then she began to think that, if he had any happiness from the feeling, it was not for her to rob him of it: he had been robbed of joy enough by his horrible wife, and he was not the man nor was she the girl to let any harm



come of that feeling. Besides, immersed as he was in his scientific work, there was no chance in the world of his ever finding out what had happened to him. Then she blushed with pleasure at the thought that it had been her lot to awaken this passion in her famous cousin. She submitted, therefore, to his cousinly kisses with equanimity, fearful lest by opposing them she might awake him to the distressing knowledge of his unfortunate plight. Indeed, in her desire to brighten his joyless life, she contrived to meet them with a good deal of answering warmth.

Since Mr. Glaisher's desire to brighten her life was even stronger than her desire to brighten his, presently they fell into the way of meeting in town, going to a *matinée* together and after it to a quiet teashop in Bond Street. By mutual and tacit consent they never told Mrs. Busby-Glaisher of these jaunts; and it never occurred to them to return by the same train. Also, his study was in the same corridor as Mary's room; and it became her practice to spend an hour or two talking with him, when Mrs. Busby-Glaisher and the servants believed her to be in her beauty sleep.

Under the influence of Mary's delightful companionship, Mr. Glaisher changed. His years began to fall off him; he began to take an interest in life, outside his laboratory, and on occasion he would make an entirely foolish but amusing joke. Of course, it also affected his work; and he made a discovery of such importance that the scientific



world was of one mind that he must receive a baronetcy at the earliest possible moment at which baronetcies were going about. He told Mary, to her abounding delight, that he owed the discovery to the stimulation of her companionship.

He had for some time, however, been troubled in mind : there was something in the way in which she received his kisses which did not seem to him quite on the lines of cousinly affection ; and he applied his scientifically trained intelligence to them with the keenest interest. He was forced to the conclusion that Mary, though she did not know it, had fallen in love with him. He was a man of no little humility, but there was no getting away from the fact : his joy was only equalled by his amazement. However, he kept his discovery to himself. Mary could only be distressed by the fact, and no good could possibly come of her learning it. It was much better to leave things as they were.

But in the most unsuspecting house so close a friendship must have excited attention ; and whatever Mrs. Busby-Glaisher was, she was not unsuspecting. She had, however, been very busy purging Pringle Hill of a curate who had incurred her well-founded, bitter displeasure by refusing to distribute a charitable bequest among the more undeserving poor whose servility had won them her favour. She had employed her usual calumnious methods to effect her purpose ; and they had taken time to do their work. Now the departure of the curate had lifted this burden from her mind ; and

she had it free and at leisure to discover the close friendship between Mary and her husband. Before she made any discovery, however, it chanced that she read in the "Morning Post" that her husband was about to be created a baronet; and the news produced so violent an access of self-importance that she fell ill.

It proved an illness which neither the local doctor nor a London specialist could diagnose or deal with. They were roughly aware that she was suffering from nervous shock; but some of the symptoms were uncommon and obscure. Pringle Hill was surprised to hear of her illness, for she had never failed to make light of the ailments of her more delicate friends, and had been wont to boast of the soundness of the Busby stock, asseverating that she had never had a day's illness in her life though she always ate and drank everything she fancied, and plenty of it. Pringle Hill was assiduous in its inquiries; and each of the ladies of her circle, knowing with what firmness their leader would visit on their heads any remissness on their part, showed far greater anxiety about making sure that Mrs. Busby-Glaisher was informed of her inquiry than about the progress of her illness. Then they heard with amazement that Mrs. Busby-Glaisher had passed peacefully away, babbling of baronetcies. Confusion reigned in Pringle Hill; her circle was in the condition of shepherdless sheep.

But Mrs. Busby-Glaisher had not passed peacefully away at all. She was in a cataleptic trance.

Her sense of hearing and of smell were unimpaired, and so, too, was her vanity. She could see everything within the range of her fixed eyes, the lids of which were not quite closed ; but she could neither move nor feel. At first her resentment, and it was bitter, was confined to these physical disabilities ; then she began to resent, with no less bitterness, the slight attention and respect paid to her supposed corpse. No one came near it. Her husband, to whom, as under some misapprehension, she assured herself she had been a good wife, never came near her. Mary, to whom she had given a good home, at her husband's expense, and all the social advantages of Pringle Hill, never came near her. Even the servants failed to display a proper and natural curiosity, and never came near her. She soothed her resentment somewhat by considerations of how she would visit this neglect upon them when she recovered from her trance.

On the second day, however, she had no longer to resent neglect. Pringle Hill came in a decorous, sorrowful procession to look its last on the lady who had so long ruled it. Mrs. Busby-Glaisher was appeased ; but not for long. The ladies came in couples ; and it was but seldom that a couple got out of the room without letting fall some disparaging remark, which enraged her almost to the point of setting her heart beating. There seemed an infuriating unanimity of opinion among them that even death had been unable to soften her terrific presence. She heard not a word of its majesty.

Most exasperating of all was the visit of Mr. Gudge, the rector, and his wife. He had always been her strong supporter—chiefly from a wholesome awe of her—and for some minutes he babbled the most decorous platitudes about the loss to Pringle Hill. Then his wife took up the tale with extreme frankness, and enumerating a score of instances of her truculent tyranny, her scandal-mongering, and her malignity, demonstrated the irrefutable fact that Pringle Hill would be much better without her. Mrs. Busby-Glaisher had always distrusted Mrs. Gudge; she realised furiously how well-founded that distrust had been. She passed the night very comfortably thinking out terrible punishments for her detractors.

The next afternoon Mr. Glaisher and Mary came into the room. Mary had learned that the servants were surprised that he had never been in it since his wife's death. She had told him, and come with him. He stood for a while looking gloomily at Mrs. Busby-Glaisher; then in an overwhelming relief, in a violent revulsion against the wretchedness, the emotional starvation of his married life, he caught Mary to him and cried, "Oh, I am so glad to be free! I never knew—I never realised how she weighed on me!" and he kissed her.

Mrs. Busby-Glaisher's blood would have run cold at his callous disregard of her; but it was not running.

For a breath Mary clung to him, flushing and trembling; then she murmured, "Not here, Jack—oh, not here!"

“ You owe nothing to her. She bullied you shamefully. I owe nothing—nothing good to her,” he said slowly and resentfully. “ And it’s just as well, for we needn’t delay getting married. But certainly she does make this room rather uncomfortable. Let’s clear out of it.”

As they went out, Mrs. Busby-Glaisher would have swelled with fury, but she could not swell.

After she had recovered from her rage that she had been so blind to their feelings, she spent a blissful night elaborating the signal vengeance she she would take on Mary, when she came out of her trance. She saw that she could not punish her husband as she would have liked, because it would lower Lady Busby-Glaisher’s social eminence to be separated from Sir John Glaisher. But she would be able to make his life all the greater burden to him : nothing, however, and no one stood between her and her vengeance on Mary. But unfortunately for her vicious designs, her relations, the Busbies, overbore Mr. Glaisher’s desire for modest obsequies, and gave her the most magnificent funeral Pringle Hill had ever seen.

## THE SWEETHEART OF FLYING WILL

**M**R. WILLIAM RUSTON, known to fame as Flying Will, had a gentle heart; and even if, sometimes, in the exercise of his calling, or the pursuit of his pleasure, he had done violence to its gentleness, it was but natural that, when he rode up to the "White Hart" and found the landlord, Cyrus Bodset, beating a child with a strap, he should cry very sharply, "Hi! you there! Bodset! Let that child be, will you!"

His words fell on deaf ears; and, his temper being as short as his heart was gentle, he swung himself off The Kestrel, caught Bodset by the collar, and with a well-planted kick sent him staggering across the yard. Bodset turned and abused him from a full heart, assuring him that he should esteem the day on which he saw him hanged a happy one; then went grumbling into the inn. A grinning ostler led away The Kestrel; and Flying Will was left standing before the child, who cried on, her face hidden in her hands.

He gazed at her in some embarrassment; for though he was a younger son of a good family, he had quarrelled with his father five years before,

and of late had only met gentlewomen, now and again, in coaches. He saw that the child, for all her coarse, homespun gown and bare feet, had an air of breeding ; her skin and black hair were fine, her feet were small, and her small hands were, for those Georgian days, white. He was at a loss how to soothe her.

But when, presently, the note of her sobbing changed from pain to anger, he said, for all the world as if he were dealing with The Kestrel in a tantrum, "Soh, now soh : gently, little lady, gently," and patted her head.

The child peeped at him through her fingers, and saw a tall, slight figure, dressed in a coat of a dull crimson colour, a flowered vest, white riding-breeches, and long boots, all very neat and fresh ; a pale, pleasant face with clean-cut features and bright eyes ; a very fine debonair gentleman indeed.

He caught the gleam of her eyes through her fingers, said, "Come, come, little sweetheart ; cry no more. It's all over " ; and gently drew her hands from her face.

He stepped back with a soft whistle of amazed admiration ; and in truth, her delicate face with the flush of anger on it, the dilated nostrils, the great dark eyes brilliant with the tears that brimmed them yet, the whole thrown into vivid relief by the frame of black hair, was of a startling beauty. He swept off his hat with a very low bow and said, "Your servant, little Madam."

Satisfied by a swift, keen glance that he was not

jesting with her, the child made him a pretty curtsey; he caught her up lightly in his arms, carried her into the inn, and set her in the great arm-chair in the parlour. Then, throwing himself into the facing chair, he smiled at her so pleasantly that she smiled back at him without knowing why.

He called for a bottle of claret and glasses. When they came, he poured out a glass of wine for her, filled one for himself, clinked their rims together, and crying, "I drink to your eyes, little Mistress!" drank it off. He filled it again quickly, cried, "I drink to your lips, little Mistress!" and drank the half of it.

"I drink to you, sir," said the child, and touched her lips with the glass.

Her voice rang pleasant, but with a foreign ring. She gazed at him, very serious and well-mannered.

"I, little Madam, am Mr. William Ruston, at your service; and you would oblige me by telling me who you are, and how you came here."

It was an odd story, eked out by his many questions, that she told him, a story not uncommon in that villainous age. Her name was Suzanne; she had lived in France, in the country, in a beautiful house, a big house, a château. . . . Ever so long ago. . . . Oh, but years. . . . Her nurse had taken her to walk in the woods. . . . And there was a carriage . . . ever so large . . . in the lane. . . . And a little man in it . . . an ugly little man. . . . And her nurse had lifted her into the carriage, and climbed in after her; and they had driven for hours



and hours till they came to a town. . . . Oh, but a vast town. . . . No ; she did not know the name of it. . . . And they had told her, the little ugly man and her nurse, that dear mamma was coming to her ; but she never came. . . . “ No nevaire.” . . . And then she had driven to the sea, not with her nurse and the little ugly man, but with Monsieur Louis, who was very tall and always frowned when she spoke to him and asked him when dear mamma would come. . . . And then they sailed in a ship . . . the *Unicorn* was its name. . . . They had sailed for ever such a long time . . . days and days. . . . And at first she was sick. . . . Oh, but sick ! . . . And then she had played with the sailors. . . . They were English, and she did not know what they meant when they spoke, but she had played with them, and they were kind men. . . . And they came to another great town. . . . Bristol the sailors called it. . . . And then she rode in a carriage with Monsieur Louis. . . . He was always sulky, Monsieur Louis. . . . They drove for miles and miles till they came to the “ White Hart.” . . . And Monsieur Louis had gone away and left her there. . . . And after a while Mr. Bodset began to beat her. . . . Always for nothing, nothing at all. . . . He was a cruel man, very cruel, Mr. Bodset. . . . And she had never seen dear mamma any more. . . . “ Nevaire any more.” . . . And her voice sank and died away ; and again the great tears brimmed her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

This was the story Mr. William drew from her

with much questioning. Now and again she broke into the French tongue and had to repeat it in English, for he had no French. There was no telling whether she had been kidnapped for a matter of money, or in payment of a grudge. There seemed no chance of restoring her to her home. She could not tell him its name, or the name of the first town she had been carried to. He sat regarding her in silence for a while, pondering a thought which had come to him.

Why should he not make this pretty child his own? They were vastly alike: she was alone in the world, and so was he. She had lost her kinsfolk; he had quarrelled with his. She had no friends; and any of his friends, or rather hangers-on, would cheerfully sell him for ten guineas, could they be really sure that he would not escape to take vengeance. It seemed to him that if Suzanne's beautiful eyes looked for his coming, the world through which he came to them would be brighter. Besides, one day he might chance on Fortune smiling, and bring from the encounter money enough to buy a small farm. If there were Suzanne, he would buy it; if there were no Suzanne, the money would go as it had gone before.

His mind was made up; he was not a man to waste time; his eyes brightened, and he said to Suzanne, "Would you like to belong to me, Suzanne?"

Suzanne clasped her hands, and with a shining face cried, "Oh—but yes, I should!"

Flying Will banged his hand on the table and cried, "Bodset ! Bodset !"

The landlord came in, his sulky, brutal face set so lowering that Suzanne's heart sank at the thought that this kind and gentle friend would never be able to persuade him to give her to him.

But Mr. William Ruston was looking neither gentle nor kind : he had changed to a gentleman of a grim, overbearing air, with thin straight lips, who said in a truculent, rasping voice :

"Harkye, Bodset. I've taken a fancy to this child here ; and if you mishandle, or miscall her again, I'll cut your ears off !"

Suzanne shivered at his tone. She thought that if ever he should speak to her in such a fashion, she would die of grief and fear. It was a thousand times worse than the loud scolding of Mr. Bodset, worse than his blows.

Mr. Bodset broke into loud complaint : if an honest Englishman might not chastise the servants in his own house, who might ?

"Did you mark what I said ? I'll cut your ears off !" shouted Flying Will savagely. And Bodset and Suzanne jumped to his shout.

He glared at Bodset for a while ; then he said, "How did you come by her ?"

Bodset hesitated ; then he burst into a whining tale of how a French gentleman had left her at the inn, promising to send money for her charges. That was a year ago—a year and a half ; and no money had come, not a penny. How should

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an honest Englishman live, feeding foreign brats ?

Mr. William Ruston eyed him sourly ; then he said in a careless tone, " Well, I've taken a fancy to the child. I've a mind to buy her off you. I'll give you a guinea for her."

Suzanne's face, wavering from hope to fear, fell at the little price he set on her.

Bodset's greedy eyes brightened, but he cried, " Sell flesh and blood for a guinea ! Whoever heard of the like ? And the little baggage is growing useful—the work she does—you'd never believe it."

" No, I shouldn't," said Mr. William Ruston. " Well, you rogue, how much ? "

" Three guineas, Mr. Ruston. What's three guineas to a gentleman from London town ? " said Bodset.

" Done ! " said Mr. William Ruston with a little yawn. " But I fear me ; I fear me, Bodset, that your greed may one of these days get your neck stretched. Bring me ink and paper ; and I will draw up a bill of sale in due form. Then should you change your mind, the lawyers will have their say in the matter."

Protesting that there was no need for any bill of sale, Bodset found ink and paper in the cupboard ; and Mr. William Ruston wrote out, in a very indifferent handwriting, a bill of sale, transferring Suzanne from Bodset to himself. It was a document to make a lawyer laugh ; but for Bodset it served ; and Suzanne had changed hands.

She heaved a sigh of relief ; and Flying Will, hectoring again, said, " She will stay here at my charge for a while ; and see that she has the best of everything. D'ye hear ? She will sleep in that little bedroom across the passage."

He took his purse from his pocket and counted out the three guineas. As the door closed behind the landlord, Flying Will lost his hectoring air, he stretched out his arms, and said with a charming smile, " Give me a kiss on the bargain, little sweetheart."

She sprang to him with a little sobbing cry, threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him with all her heart.

" Those are the sweetest kisses I've tasted this long while," said Flying Will.

From that day Suzanne's life was changed indeed : no more abuse, no more blows. Her new friend took up his abode at the " White Hart," and seemed disposed to stay there for a while. The summer before he had spent three weeks there. He only left it for one day to ride to Bristol and bring back his valise full of taffetas, muslins, lace, and fine cambrics for Suzanne's adornment ; and besides, a crimson cloak that he had chosen for her because it matched his coat. A seamstress from the village made the stuffs into gowns of a rustical simplicity, but on the child vastly pretty and becoming ; and she went in her new finery more beautiful than ever. Dearest to her of all of it was the crimson cloak, because Flying Will had chosen it as matching

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his coat ; and ever and again, in her own chamber, she would pat it lovingly and stroke it and kiss it.

These strange companions of a whim were much together. Suzanne would have been with him all the day had she had her will. But she rose early and went to bed early ; and he was late about both. He had also to exercise The Kestrel, and sometimes he would drink and talk or dice with the young farmers round about. He avoided the rare travellers who rested or stayed at the out-of-the-way inn. Suzanne breakfasted with him, and sat with him under the great elm before the inn while he smoked his long pipe and watched the grooming of The Kestrel, a powerful bay of a rare turn of speed and great endurance. Then he would ride out for an hour, and on his return the pair would saunter along the lanes or the footpaths through the fields till dinner. They dined together, late, at three and sometimes four o'clock, for he rose late ; and after dinner they would saunter again, or he would sing to her, in a very pretty tenor voice, at the rickety spinet in the inn parlour. She took a delight in all he did, or said, or sang ; and he never found her wearisome. He never tired of telling her stories, making boyish jokes to set her laughing, or singing to her. Her pretty face, so quick to respond to all his moods, even to the sadness induced in him by a plaintive song, was a perpetual delight to him. Mr. William Ruston was but an amateur of the road.

Then, since man is but a schoolmaster and must needs be teaching woman, he began to teach her.

He taught her to ride The Kestrel, very patient of her fear of the great horse, till she gained courage, and The Kestrel came to know her. He taught her to throw a fly, indifferently, when he fished for trout in the brook which turned the wheel of Deeping Mill.

Then on a wet afternoon he began to teach her to read out of a volume of the plays of William Shakespeare, left at the inn by a forgetful traveller, and then bought a horn-book from the village schoolmaster, and went on with it. She learned quickly. Then he was shocked to find that her mind was full of papistical heresies, that she prayed to the Virgin and to St. Catharine, her patron saint ; and he taught her to say her prayers like a Christian child. Suzanne made no difficulty about it, since her only desire was to please him, and her papistical heresies were not deeply embedded in her mind. When they went, sedate and decorous, to the village church on a Sunday morning, you could not have found a pair to match them in all England.

Little by little, in that quiet life, certain lines, scored on his face by the wild life he had led, began to fade ; his hand grew steady, and his eyes grew clear as Suzanne's own ; a colour began to mantle his pale cheeks. His fine hair was Suzanne's peculiar care. She had heard him say that he missed the *perruquier* ; and every morning as he sat smoking peacefully under the elm, she would brush and brush it till she got it to her liking. That honest Englishman, Bodset, could never see her at the task she loved without exasperation.



## 234 SWEETHEART OF FLYING WILL

Then one Saturday, after paying his bill, Mr. William Ruston wore for a while a troubled air. His face grew serene again ; but on the Sunday he was at times thoughtful, and he did not sleep through the sermon as was his custom. On the Monday he said that he must visit a cousin at Bristol, and might not come back for ten days or longer. He gave Suzanne ten guineas to mind for him, bidding her, if his cousin kept him longer, pay Bodset for her food and lodging from them. He kissed her good-bye very tenderly, and rode away with a gloomy face.

For Suzanne, with his going, the summer had gone out of the year. She was indeed forlorn, and for the first long and dreary day she wandered restlessly in and out of the inn. She had no heart to chatter to the maids. On the second day she betook herself to the top of a hill whence she could look down on the three miles of the long lane which ran to the great Bristol road ; and there she spent the greater part of the days that followed. Bodset let her be ; save for a word to one of the two maids of the inn, she was as lonely as she had been before the coming of Flying Will.

On the eighth day she had come slowly back from her watch, and was in her chamber grieving that there were still two whole days at least before she would see him ; of a sudden his clear voice cried from below, " Little sweetheart ! "

Scarcely believing her ears, she sprang to the casement ; and there was Mr. William Ruston on The Kestrel, smiling up at her. She ran down the



stairs and flung herself, speechless and breathless with surprise and joy, into his arms. She supped with him in an ecstasy.

The next morning when he was smoking under the elm and she was brushing his hair, Tod, the ostler, brought round The Kestrel to groom him under his master's eye.

He had scarcely set the brush to him, when he said, "The 'oss 'as been in a fresh whitewashed stall. 'E's been covered with white patches."

"It may be so. I mounted in the dusk and rode through the night, the first stage," said Mr. William Ruston carelessly.

"'E must ha' been nearly piebald," said Tod.

"Nay, an he had been, I should have seen it," said Mr. William Ruston.

"Maybe it shook off as you rode in the night," said Tod.

"Maybe," said Mr. William Ruston.

Bodset, who stood in the doorway of the inn, walked out and looked The Kestrel over; "Danged if 'e ain't been walking in whitewash," he said.

"Horses do queer things," said Mr. William Ruston. "But it may be that some fool at my cousin's house played a trick on me that I missed."

Suzanne and he took up the thread of their life together where his absence had broken it; and she soon forgot the lonely days when he had been away from her. Again they sauntered along the lanes together, or fished in the brook; she rode The Kestrel, and went on learning to read.

He had been back five days, when one afternoon Robert Brook, a young farmer of the neighbourhood, rode up to the inn, called to Mr. William Ruston to drink with him, and as he set down his tankard of ale, said :

"Ten days ago the Bishop of Wells was stopped ten mile out of Bristol and robbed of two hundred guineas by a man on a piebald horse. They do say that it was Flying Will."

"Flying Will keeps the London roads. What should he be doing in these parts?" said Mr. William Ruston.

"It was a piebald horse with white stockings the thief rode," said the farmer. "And Flying Will rides a piebald always they do say—a piebald with white stockings."

"That be true," said Bodset, who was serving them.

"There are many piebalds all about the countryside," said Mr. William Ruston.

"'Tis true," said the farmer.

"There ain't none so many neither," said Bodset ; and he looked at Mr. William Ruston oddly.

For the next few days Bodset was sulkier and more silent than ever. His cunning mind worked slowly. As he lolled against the doorpost of the inn, his favourite place, his dull eyes would rest continually on Mr. William Ruston with a question in them. Sometimes he would stand leaning over the door of The Kestrel's stall, and gazing at the horse with the same question in his eyes. Mr. William Ruston never

perceived it. Ten days later he learned one morning that Bodset had gone to Bristol. He was away three days, and came back as sulky as ever. But now when he lolled against his doorpost his eyes always gazed down the lane which led to the Bristol road. He seemed to look for some one.

It was a week later that Mr. Christie came to the inn, a restless, fussy fellow, sharp-eyed, and brisk of manner. He was an agent of Lord Howth, and took up his abode at the inn while he did some business for him. It was a matter of buying a farm. At first Mr. William Ruston had little to do with him; but Mr. Christie presently showed himself a good companion. He knew London, and he knew Bristol; he was a good talker, and could tell a good story. He fell into the way of dining and supping with Mr. William Ruston and Suzanne. Suzanne detested him; she wished to have her dear Will to herself. But Mr. William Ruston was finding his companionship more and more agreeable. It was a very pleasant relief in the quiet country. It is true that he often found him impertinent when he questioned him about his family and the inheritance from his father upon which, he had told him, he lived. But then the fellow, though good company, was no gentleman.

Suzanne came to detest Mr. Christie more and more as more and more he filled Will's time. They could not talk together when Mr. Christie was with them, and he was always with them. She was indeed rejoiced when one evening he said that

on the morrow he must be going back to Bristol and then to London. At supper he talked with some anxiety about a friend of his who was starting on the morrow from Bath to go to London, carrying with him seven hundred guineas.

Mr. William Ruston laughed at his anxiety, protesting that the roads were passing safe, and that it was any odds that, since there was so much booty in it, that was the very coach the gentlemen of the road would miss. But Mr. Christie shook his head and professed himself very anxious for his friend ; seven hundred guineas was not easily come by.

On the next morning he rode away on his grey cob ; and all through the day Flying Will was so full of thought that Suzanne went about with him silent, wondering at his mood. In the evening he left her, and went to the Parsonage for a while. He was more tender than his wont in bidding her good night, and said, " If any ill ever befall me, little sweetheart, go you to the parson. He is an honest man ; I have left with him a hundred guineas for you, and he will be your friend."

" I want no friends but you, Will dear," said Suzanne, very earnest. " And if ill befell you, I—I—should die."

" Never do anything so foolish, little sweetheart. I'm not worth it," he said, smiling, and kissed her again.

Suzanne slept but lightly, and she was aroused in the night by the clink of a hoof against a pebble. She slipped out of bed to the casement, and saw

Mr. William Ruston leading The Kestrel, saddled and bridled, out of the yard of the inn. She was in doubt whether to call to him ; he seemed to be going secretly. Before she could make up her mind he was gone. Then indeed she was troubled ; she leaned from the casement, a score of uneasy fancies hurrying through her head. At last, chilled, she went back to her bed, and lay awake and miserable, a prey to the fear that he was leaving her for a long while. Some half-hour later, she heard again the sound of hoofs ; and her heart leapt in her. She sprang to the casement as Mr. Christie rode into the yard on his grey cob ; and her heart sank.

He came to the back door beneath her, and tapped lightly on it. It was opened at once to his tap ; and he said, " Has he ridden forth ? "

" Ay, this half-hour," said the voice of Bodset. " 'E axed me to-day what time the Bath coach came down the Bristol road ; and I told 'im that, seeing that the weather had been fine so long and the going was good, it should pass Bawton Clump soon after midnight. At Bawton Clump you'll find 'im."

Mr. Christie chuckled, and said, " Good ! The best trap I ever set. Four soldiers in the coach, three on the outside, and two riding behind the screen of the coach, all with their weapons ready primed. It's ill work robbing bishops. They have a long arm. If Flying Will, *alias* Mr. William Ruston, *alias* I don't know what, ain't dead or in Bristol gaol before morning, my name ain't Jack

Swain. I'll be getting on. I've time to ride round by Gilder's End and catch the coach at the far bottom of Bawton Hill."

"And my fifty guineas for informing?" said Bodset.

"Oh, they're safe enough; Jack Swain always pays," he said, and he rode briskly out of the yard.

Suzanne was trembling like an aspen; and her mind was awlirl. She understood but little of the matter; but she understood that Will was in danger and at Bawton Clump. Was there time to warn him? She did not know; she could only try. At any rate there was no time to lose. She heard Bodset come stumping upstairs to the garret above, where he slept. She slipped on her red cloak over her night-shift, picked up her shoes, opened the door, and began to steal softly down the stairs. Every board seemed to her to creak louder than a gunshot. She reached the bottom and listened. Bodset was quiet in his garret. She stole down the passage to the back door, drew the bolt gently back, and was out of the inn.

She drew on her shoes, crept quietly out of the yard, and along the turf by the road in the shadow of the hedge, till she was out of sight of the inn; then she began to run.

The road stretched dark and lonely before her; but to the darkness and loneliness, commonly most dreadful to her, she gave no thought. The overmastering desire to save Will drove all other thought from her mind; and she ran panting on. She did

not slacken for the first mile ; then her legs could carry her at the pace no longer, and she was forced to walk. Soon she was running again. Here and there she stumbled, once she fell and cut her hands ; the shock shook a burst of tears from her. They soon dried, and she was running again. At last, running and walking, walking and running, she staggered out on to the Bristol Road at the foot of Bawton Hill, her little feet lead, her legs mere shooting pains, her breath shaking gasps, her eyes nearly blind. All her body cried on her to rest ; but her spirit was the stronger, she paused but a moment to listen, and heard nothing. For the first time fear gripped her heart ; with a great sob she flung away her red cloak, kicked off her shoes that were weights to her feet ; and barefoot, and in her night-shift, a piteous little white figure, struggled up the hill. It seemed to tower above her to the sky. Half-way up it she heard the rattle of the coach mounting the other side. It spurred her to the last tottering run. She came on to the top to see the lights of the coach fifty yards away, and under the trees, not twenty yards from her, a dark horseman waiting. She had no voice to cry out to him ; she tottered to his side, and gripped his long boot.

His eyes were on the coach ; he turned, looked down, and cried out, thinking the little white form a spirit ; but the grip was flesh and blood, and he cried, " Suzanne ! "

" The coach—soldiers ! " gasped the child, clutching at her constricted bosom.

Swift as thought he leaned down ; caught her by the arms ; swung her on to the saddle before him ; and set The Kestrel at the hedge. A shout from the coach, a bellow of muskets as the horse rose to the leap ; Suzanne jerked in his arms to the sound ; and he landed safe in the meadow. Three horsemen crashed through the fence behind him ; and he sat down to ride The Kestrel as he had never ridden him before. He felt Suzanne's hand grope feebly up his chest, touch his lips and fall. The fields flew by ; The Kestrel cleared hedge after hedge ; the pursuing hoofs grew fainter, and died away. He wondered at the stillness of the child in his arms and shifted her into an easier position. He need not have been at the pains ; a bullet had pierced her faithful breast ; and the night-shift dyed in her life-blood, matched his crimson coat as nearly as the cloak she had thrown away to save him.



## MARSH HORNY

### I

#### THE SHEEP-SHEARER

THE nomadic life she led with her father had educated Dolores Vesey far beyond her station. The wealthy heir of the Earl of Sudlington, he had been smitten in early life by the passion for research, and through her childhood and girlhood he had wandered about the Continent collecting facts for his synthetic study of the primitive religion of the European peoples. Always he had taken his motherless child with him; and she had spent the years between out-of-the-way villages, where the old customs still lingered for those who would learn them, and the great capitals, where her father conferred with learned professors on the facts he had gathered. Thus it had come about that she not only spoke admirably the main languages of Europe, but spoke with more or less ease score or more of their little-known dialects. It was in her experience to be the lady bountiful of a Hungarian village in the summer, and hostess of a Vienna *salon* in the winter. She could talk with equal ease to a German diplomat who fondly

believed himself to control the destinies of Europe, and to a Silesian peasant profoundly interested in his growing crop. Moreover, with a scholar's belief in education, her father had seen to it that an excellent governess, and later an excellent tutor, had always travelled with them ; and they had seen to it that their pupil's attention was carefully drawn to the best in literature and the arts, according to their lights, that Europe has to offer. It had come about, therefore, that she was nearly as well acquainted with developed man's literary and artistic achievements as with primitive man's gropings after the secret of the universe. She bore this load of knowledge easily, since it had come to her slowly and without effort ; and from these diverse sources she had unconsciously acquired an uncommon working knowledge of human nature, and a no less uncommon feeling for beauty.

With a patriotism only natural in a cosmopolitan scholar, Mr. Vesey had left his native land to the last. Having exhausted the folklore of the Continent, he had lately turned his attention to the British Isles. Finding nothing about Kent in the great English folklorists, he had taken Pyechurch Manor for the summer, and transported thither himself, his daughter, their servants, and his manuscripts.

On the morning after their coming Dolores came through the old wrought-iron gates of the walled garden of the Manor, took a few steps towards the sea-wall, some fifty yards away, changed her mind, and turned down the road which runs across the

Marsh. After a fortnight in stale London the freshness of the country was very grateful to her. The sun was uncommonly hot for the fifteenth of June ; and the marsh was simmering in a steamy heat. She was presently impressed by the fullness of life of the country round her. She had rarely observed a vitality of nature so intense, even in Southern Europe. The dykes on both sides of the road were fuller of a taller, thicker sedge than she had ever seen in England before ; the hay crops in the meadows across the dykes were very heavy ; and in the grazing meadows the sheep were feeding on rich grass that rose above their knees. Where, here and there, the dykes wound away from the road, and she walked between hedges, she was surprised by the heaviness of their foliage and the rank, rich growth of the plants in their choked ditches. Never had she seen bees in such myriads, or heard their hum so heavy. The impression of an abnormal luxuriance of life grew stronger as she went deeper into the Marsh ; and presently she was invaded by a strange oppression. The depths of her being seemed trying to respond to the fecundity of nature ; she was disturbed by a vague, uneasy longing.

It was an odd feeling, strange to her ; she walked on, trying to fathom and define it, and turned off the main road into a smaller road which ran from it to the left, because its hedges afforded some shade. She came round a winding in it, past a clump of trees, to a shearing-pen, and stopped to watch the shearer. Her long acquaintance with peasant life

had rendered her unable to pass a rustic operation without watching it ; and her eyes fell with a familiar pleasure on the white flakes of wool falling back before the shears. Half a minute's watching showed her that the shearer enjoyed uncommon skill ; and she raised her eyes to his face. The sight of it thrilled her beauty-loving soul with a startled wonder, the surprise of an unexpected recognition. She had seen its likeness a score of times in European galleries, its closest likeness in the delightful face of the young horned Bacchus, whose statue, of the rounded, almost womanly contours, she liked better than anything in the Vatican galleries. The resemblance was astounding : the very smile, faint and gentle, of the Bacchus played round the sheep-shearer's lips ; and his hair rose in two little tufts on either side of his brow in the likeness of the Bacchus' budding horns.

Intent upon his work, the shearer had not heard her light step ; and she gazed her fill at her ease. A light golden tan covered the fine skin of his face and throat and bare arms. His hair shone very golden in the sun ; and the slender fingers which plied the shears were unmarred by the blunted, broken nails of the rustic.

When her eyes had taken their fill, she wished to hear his voice, and said gently :

“ Good morning.”

He raised his head and gazed at her with sunny, kind, blue eyes. On the instant they began to fill with admiring pleasure as they drank in the beauty

of the pale oval of her face, of the delicate features which her full, scarlet lips hardly matched, of her dark starry eyes, all set in a heavy frame of dark silken hair. He gazed at her with an intense, frank admiration; and to her annoyance she found herself blushing under it. It was quite out of the order of the world, as she knew it, that a well-bred girl should blush at the admiration in a sheep-shearer's eyes.

She said hastily :

"The sheep keeps very still for your shearing."

"The sheep knows it won't get hurt by me," said the sheep-shearer. "It's only with the careless or clumsy that they fuss—sheep."

The diction was rustic; but he spoke in a pleasant, modulated voice, quite lacking in the rustic roughness.

"You have a lot to do with sheep?" said Dolores.

"Only at lambing time, or the shearing when the farmers want an extra hand. But sheep are simple things, easy to understand and manage—except, like everything else, when they're bewitched."

On the instant Dolores was on the alert. A great part of her father's store of folklore and superstitions was of her gathering. Her long acquaintance with the peasant mind had given her the knack of setting country folk at ease with her. Besides, now that she had ripened to beauty, her eyes would unlock any man's tongue.

"Are they often bewitched?" she said quietly.

"Is it the fairies who bewitch them? Or do they get overlooked?" Her tone was matter-of-fact; there was not a suspicion of idle curiosity in it; it was informed with the simple desire for knowledge.

"It's not overlooking," said the sheap-shearer thoughtfully. "Though they do say there's a woman out to Lyminge who overlooks people. But she doesn't come to the Marsh. No; it's things in the Marsh."

"Well, only the other day I was reading that all the fairies except Puck had left England, sailing from Dymchurch, hundreds of years ago. A great writer said it."

"Did he now?" said the sheep-shearer, with a brighter light of interest in his eyes. "Of course, Puck was a rare one for mischief—in Shakespeare, anyway. But there's worse things in the Marsh than just mischievous ones. Of course, you summer people don't feel them; though sometimes they're about in summer—when the sun goes under a cloud and the wind soughs. But it's on winter nights, and in the evenings before it's quite dark. Oh, you can feel them about then."

Dolores was again surprised. She had met men and women, too, of some fancy among mountain peasants; but never in the plains. She had not looked to find one in Romney Marsh, or even a peasant who had read some Shakespeare.

"The Marsh does not feel like it now," she said. "It feels as if they must all be asleep—these evil things."

"I don't know," said the sheep-shearer, knitting his brow. "The Marsh has felt odd the last week or two—too full of life, if that could be."

"It may be good spirits blessing it," said Dolores. "Perhaps they're not all bad, the powers of the Marsh."

"The powers of the Marsh! I like that," said the sheep-shearer quickly. "No, perhaps they're not all bad. Things balance in a way." And he smiled.

Dolores thought she had never seen a more delightful smile on human face, not even on the face of a child.

He betook himself to his shearing again; and dreamily she watched the white flakes of wool loosen from the shears.

Then she said:

"Have you ever seen one of them—these evil things?"

"No. And I don't want to," said the sheep-shearer with a little shiver. "It's enough to feel them. When they're about, I go home."

Dolores looked across the placid, teeming expanse of the Marsh, and found herself unable to imagine it the haunt of evil things. She did not think it wise to try to learn any more from him now; eagerness might awaken distrust. She watched him work, her eyes wandering fitfully from his slender, deft hands to his face. Now and again he paused to look up at her with pleased eyes.

Presently, with the directness which the well-



bred permit themselves to use to inferiors, she said, "What's your name?"

"Gabriel Burdon. What's yours?" said the sheep-shearer simply.

"Dolores Vesey," she said, a little taken aback by this answering directness.

"I never heard that name before," he said thoughtfully. "But for that matter I never saw any one like you before. So you and your name are all of a piece." And he smiled his delightful smile.

Dolores smiled too, and said, "Well, I must be getting back. Good morning."

"Good morning," said Gabriel; and his hands hung idle while he watched her out of sight.

Dolores walked back to the Manor filled with an odd fancy that the fertile, teeming Marsh in some way found its ultimate, fullest expression in the sheep-shearer. She went puzzling over the fancy. His face was very vivid in her mind.

After lunch she went into the great garden behind the Manor to read, and found an old man working in it. In a quarter of an hour she was on intimate terms with him. She learned that his name was Matthew Piddock; that he was seventy years old; that he walked over from Dymchurch every day to work in the Manor garden.

"You've got this garden in very fine order, Mr. Piddock," she said presently.

"And well I may," said the old man, in as injured a tone as if she had accused him of having spoiled it. "I never seed such a year in all my



born days. There's never been such a June—hot sun an' warm rain, warm rain an' hot sun. I never seed such crops as there is everywhere. The hay'll cut two an' a half ton to the acre in places. The like was never known. And the wheat ; it's that thick."

"A climatic year," said Dolores.

"Maybe, maybe—though I don't rightly know what climatic, as you calls it, be," said the old man. "But it be main heavy work keeping down the weeds. I never seed such weeds. But, lor', you must take the sweet with the bitter—weeds thrive, flowers thrive."

Dolores was silent awhile, watching him ply his hoe. Suddenly the face of the young sheep-shearer rose vivid, almost importunate before her eyes ; and she said, "Who's that good-looking young shepherd who's shearing sheep out towards St. Oswald's."

"Good-looking young shepherd ? " said the old man with a stress on the good-looking. "Why, that would be Marsh Horny. He's the only good-looking 'un about here."

"Marsh Horny ? " said Dolores.

"Yes, they calls him Horny 'cos of the way his hair grows. Lor', how the girls did tease him about it, when 'e was a little 'un ! Now it's the other way about—'Andsome 'Orny ' they calls him now. Oh, I hear the yammicking young sluts. They don't pay no 'eed to me. Well, he's better looking nor any of 'em. Not but what he's half a nat'ral. Whimsies is what 'is head's full of."

"Does people's hair often grow like that in the Marsh?" said Dolores.

"Lor' bless you, no, miss. And Gabriel ain't no marshman. He's a furriner, an' not even an English furriner. He is an American."

"An American!" cried Dolores.

"That's what he is. His mother's an American anyways. An' she's lived in that cottage out to St. Oswald's ever since he was a little 'un—this sixteen year. She's a queer 'un too. She don't hold with killing anything, not even vermin. And she don't hold with eating meat. I doubt as 'Orny 'as ever 'ad a full meal in his life. She keeps 'erself to 'erself, too. Not but what she always pays her way. She 'as a bit of money, Mrs. Burdon—a tidy bit, I fancy."

Dolores was surprised. Romney Marsh was hardly the place in which she would have looked to find an American devotee of the simple life. She went to the hammock, slung for her between two trees, and read till she was summoned to the house to receive callers. She found in the drawing-room the rector of Pyechurch, the squire of St. Oswald's-in-the-Marsh, and their wives. Her father came for his afternoon tea; and they talked of the Marsh and its archæological interest, chiefly Roman remains.

Mr. Vesey presently asked if the Marsh folk had kept their folklore.

"Oh, no," said the rector, a large, florid man with hard eyes. "The Church has long ago taught them

the wickedness and folly of superstition. I'm afraid that for you, Mr. Vesey, it is barren ground—barren ground. I cannot regret it.”

“Education—the Board School has swept all that away,” said the squire of St. Oswald hurriedly.

Dolores saw a shadow of uneasiness in his eyes, and divined clearly that he knew better.

“I'm not so sure about that, Edward,” said his wife. “The maids have queer ideas now and then, I can tell you.”

“Then I shall come to you when I begin to look for information,” said Mr. Vesey.

“You will get none—none of any importance. Superstition is dead,” said the rector with conviction.

When they had gone, Mr. Vesey said, “This doesn't look very promising. I'm afraid we've come to the wrong place.”

“The squire knows better,” said Dolores. “And I don't attach any importance to what the rector says. Even the *padre* of a Calabrian village is not in all the secrets of his flock; and here the social cleavage is too great for the rector to get the chance even of guessing anything. Besides, I'm already on the track of something.”

“Already?”

“Yes; on the track of the local demons, I think,” said Dolores.

“It's wonderful how you do it,” said her father. “It takes me weeks, where it takes you hours, to get intimate with a peasant—an English peasant, too,

the most secretive of all: in the shadow of the Church and the Board School."

"Well, I know what to look for exactly, and how to look for it. I've been at it a long while, you know. What should you say if I told you that I'd found the living image of Bacchus Bicorniger in the Marsh?"

Mr. Vesey wrinkled his face in discomfort, and said with a faint irritation, "Oh, that business of the horned gods! Ever since you read 'The Horned Shepherd' it has been a fixed idea with you. There's nothing in it—nothing."

"I know you won't have anything to say to it," said Dolores, knitting her brow thoughtfully. "But I think, indeed, I'm sure, that there is something in it. That exasperating man who wrote 'The Horned Shepherd' had learned or divined something, though he would not tell me anything. There's some connection between this matter of horns and the mysteries."

"Crude symbolism," said Mr. Vesey.

"Symbolism perhaps; but why crude?" said Dolores.

Mr. Vesey shrugged his shoulders, and said, "I tell you what: why shouldn't you send Francesca back to Sicily and take one of these village girls as maid? You won't learn anything more from Francesca."

Dolores gave her father a mischievous smile, and said, "I'll send Francesca back to Sicily and take a maid from the village, if you'll send Kiss Aladar back to Hungary and take a village boy as valet."

"Aladar suits me. He's learned his work," said Mr. Vesey, in some discomfort.

"So has Francesca," said Dolores. "No, no : I don't mind making sacrifices in the interests of Science ; and it is useful having these wells of folklore to hand. But there are limits to martyrdom. Francesca was a dreadful trial at the beginning, but she's an excellent maid now. I cannot go through the experience of an untried village girl, and a Pyechurch girl, as maid again. Besides, you're wrong about Francesca. She is, as we expected when I engaged her, a mine of Sicilian folklore, just as Aladar is a mine of Magyar folklore. But she is not an exhausted mine by any means. The little wretch has a secret, the secret which would give me half the Mysteries, the woman's half of them at any rate. And the worst of it is, I feel that I ought to know it, that I do know it, that every woman knows it, but will not tell it even to herself. Sometimes, when Francesca babbles to the very verge of it and stops short, grinning, I feel that one day I shall take her by the throat and bang her head against the wall till she tells it me."

"I shouldn't do that ; she mightn't like it," said Mr. Vesey, with scholarly simplicity. "But tell me about these local demons."

"Oh, I know nothing about them yet. I must go slowly. I shall get nothing for a time ; then, as it always does, everything will come with a rush. We shall find that there are more things in the Marsh than were ever dreamt of in the rector's fatuity."

She went back to her hammock and her book. In the cool of the evening, before dressing for dinner, she strolled through the village. It was quite uninteresting, but she saw Francesca, a pretty, plump girl with dark, dazzling eyes, at the door of a cottage, talking volubly in her broken English to a couple of women. It was plain that, as usual, Francesca would have made friends with the whole village before the week was out—a faculty which often proved useful to their research. As she dressed her mistress for dinner, she said that the people did not know much.

“I expect you will teach them a good deal before we go,” said Dolores.

“Oh, yes,” said Francesca simply. “They know some things. They have only forgotten.”

Dolores did not ask what she would teach them, or what they had forgotten. Sooner or later Francesca would tell her as much of it as she chose, volubly. After dinner Dolores strolled with her father down the Marsh road. They had gone less than a quarter of a mile, when Mr. Vesey said: “Really, this Marsh seems an extremely fertile place. I don’t remember ever having received such a strong impression of—of fecundity before, not in an English countryside.”

“Yes,” said Dolores dreamily. “One would not be surprised if Pan came piping down the road.”

“Why, Dolores, this is mere mythological sentimentality! We should be exceedingly surprised—both of us!” cried Mr. Vesey.

"I suppose we should," said Dolores, with a faint, uncertain laugh. "Besides, we should go mad."

They rested awhile—for it was a languid night—at a low dyke bridge; and presently Francesca and Kiss Aladar, or, to put his surname last, in the English fashion, Aladar Kiss, Mr. Vesey's Magyar valet, passed them, coming from the direction of St. Oswald's-in-the-Marsh. In the still air they heard their voices long before they reached the bridge, and long after they had passed it. The two, drawn together by the bond of being sojourners in a strange land, were close friends; and they talked endlessly in an odd jargon of Sicilian, Hungarian, and English evolved from their intercourse with one another. Dolores sometimes wondered whether they exchanged superstitions or endearments. From Francesca's blushes and smiles and evasions, when she had teased her about Kiss Aladar, it seemed likely that they exchanged both.

The night was oppressive, and Dolores slept uneasily, awaking once from a tangled dream in which the Bacchus of the Vatican sheared sheep to the piping of Francesca and Matthew Piddock. But for all her uneasy sleep she woke in an unusual lightness of spirit, an exhilaration. It was very clear in her mind that she must devote the morning to extracting Marsh folklore from Gabriel Burdon. At ten o'clock, therefore, she set out for the shearing-pen, walking rather quickly considering the heat. Just as she came to her goal, at the first glimpse of



Gabriel's kneeling figure she felt an odd, faint thrill. She had never felt it before, and slackened her pace in her surprise, trying to understand it. There was an element of excited anticipation in it, too strong to be aroused by the mere hope of getting good folklore ; and there was more, but what that more was she could not understand.

She came to the pen with a thoughtful, puzzled air. Gabriel looked up from his shearing and greeted her, smiling his enchanting smile ; she greeted him ; and they gazed at one another with curious, exploring, pleased eyes.

Hers fell before his ; and she said quickly :

" Have you sheared many sheep since yesterday ? "

" A good few," said Gabriel.

" How many do you shear in a year ? "

" I don't rightly know. I never counted. I'm slower than most, because I'm careful not to hurt them. But it makes no odds to any one but me, because I'm paid by the fleece."

He gazed at her ; she gazed at the sheep. Then she said : " I was out in the Marsh last night, and it seemed to me the most peaceful place in the world. I felt no evil powers abroad."

Gabriel's shears hung idle ; he looked at her gravely, and said, " I don't know. Something's come to the Marsh. It's restless, almost as if it had a fever, one might say. It's as if this fine, growing June had been too much for it. It feels as if something—something fierce and strong were going to



happen to it—as if the powers of the Marsh, as you called them, were working strong. Why, I feel as if something were going to happen to me, something uncommon and changing. But I can't make out what it is."

"Perhaps this wonderful weather has strengthened the ordinary powers of Nature. It may be nothing more than that," said Dolores.

"Maybe—maybe," said Gabriel; and he went on with his shearing.

Dolores watched him work, then presently she said, "Whereabouts in the Marsh do you feel these evil things?"

"Out towards the hills mostly. But I've felt them very bad nigh those pools against the sea between Dymchurch and New Romney—once on a December night, with a bitter, cold wind blowing up the snow from over the hills."

"Do the Marsh-folk have any spells against them?"

"Midsummer Eve bonfire carries them through very well. They burn their bad luck with the mugwort," said Gabriel.

"What? Is there a midsummer fire in the Marsh?" cried Dolores.

"Surely; out to Studfall Castle," said Gabriel. "Don't you have one in the parts where you come from?"

"I come from many parts. I travel a good deal. In some places there are midsummer fires, but not in others."

"There are benighted folk everywhere in the world, I suppose," said Gabriel in a pitying tone. "Why, even in the Marsh many don't go to the bonfire. Few Baptists and Methodists go; it's mostly Church folk."

He told her of the bonfire customs; and with regard to their driving cattle and sheep and pigs through its glowing embers, he said, "I taught them to plaster their hoofs and legs with mud, so that they don't get hurt. There's no need for them to get more than a bit singed to keep away ill-luck from the flocks."

While he talked he was shearing the sheep carefully; and she could at her ease feast her beauty-loving eyes on his face, which so charmed her. Now and again he smiled his delightful smile; she watched for it eagerly, and greeted it with an answering smile of sheer, thrilling pleasure.

She talked to him for an hour, and then walked slowly home, thinking far more of his face than of the facts she had gathered. At lunch she told her father of her discovery of a midsummer fire festival in the Marsh; but she did not tell him that she had resolved to go to it, to have the details of the festival at first hand. That afternoon she went back to the shearing-pen; she felt strongly that it was her duty to gather more folklore, and she preserved a decent reticence with herself about the attraction the sheep-shearer's face had for her. For a while they talked of the fairy-lore of the Marsh, which was slight, and of the witchlore, which was sligh-  
ter.

Then, insensibly, they fell to talking of themselves. She told him of her travels and the cities she had seen. He showed a great distrust of cities, the fruit, she gathered, of his mother's teaching. He told her of his perpetual wanderings in the Marsh, of its people and its creatures. She had rarely spent a pleasanter afternoon ; she had rarely found herself grow so fully, so sympathetically, intimate with any one.

On her way home a village girl passed her, going into the Marsh ; a dark-eyed, black-haired girl, with her thick eyebrows meeting in the fashion which a score of peasants in different countries had told Dolores was the mark of a werewolf, or of a vampire. She was struck by the bright, eager expectancy on the girl's face ; and it suddenly flashed on her that she was going to Gabriel. She was amazed by the sudden anger which took her at the thought, assured herself vehemently that he was a thousand times too good for a village girl, and awoke to the sense of her extravagance. She was indeed startled, and ashamed of it. She began to assure herself firmly that the matter had nothing to do with her ; and for the while persuaded herself that it had not. But she passed a troubled evening, striving to keep herself blind to the meaning of that fit of anger. One of the results of her striving seemed to be that Gabriel's face kept rising in her mind with extraordinary vividness ; and once or twice she saw the girl's face, with its look of bright expectancy, no less plain.

The next day was Sunday, and there was no sheep-shearing. She found herself oddly restless. Just before tea, Francesca, who had been hooking up the back of her mistress's gown, chanced to look out of the window. Suddenly she gave a little cry and rushed out of the room. Dolores heard her cry, "Aladar! Aladar! Aladar!" as she flew down the stairs; and she went to the window to look for the cause of her excitement. About thirty yards down the road she saw Gabriel, bareheaded, walking with a tall, middle-aged woman, of a keen, ascetic face, doubtless his mother. At the sight of him she felt again the odd thrill which had so surprised her the day before, and stepped back into the room that he might not see her.

Francesca and Kiss Aladar hurried out to the iron gates, and through the bars watched Gabriel and his mother pass. Then they came back to the house talking quickly and loudly in their odd jargon. Among their gibberish Dolores caught Francesca's "Il uomo cornuto! Il uomo cornuto!" and Aladar's "E Ligho! E Kupalo!" She was wondering what it all meant; and when Francesca came to her in an excitement which turned all her fingers to thumbs, she asked her. Francesca would only say in her quick Sicilian, "I have seen a marvellous thing, mistress! Marvellous! Marvellous!"

Dolores awoke next morning in an equable and reasonable state of mind. She saw quite plainly that her interest in Gabriel Burdon was merely the interest that any one with her finely trained sense

of beauty would take naturally in a beautiful object, and that her anger at the sight of the pretty village girl going to meet him had been but a natural irritation at the thought of a beautiful thing falling into unworthy hands. Nevertheless, she made up her mind that she would not go to gather folklore from him that day, and abode in the resolve till nearly eleven o'clock. Then a tiresome restlessness drove her out into the Marsh ; and her feet carried her straight and swiftly to the shearing-pen. Again at the first sight of him the odd thrill ran through her ; and there was in the delightful smile with which he greeted her a new quality of admiration, or it might be adoration, which thrilled her again. She filled with an exhilaration which made the blood sing in her veins. Perhaps it blinded her to the fact that she forgot to gather folklore, but talked only with Gabriel of his dim, childish memories of America, and of his childhood and boyhood in the Marsh ; of the strange, simple upbringing his mother had given him ; of his relations with the Marsh-folk. His mother had encouraged him, plainly on the theory that peasants are simple-hearted, to mix with them, but by her talk, teaching, and books had kept him aloof from them in spirit, above them. He made an extraordinary impression of singleness and soundness of heart upon her ; she felt uncomfortably sophisticated beside him.

From talking about himself he fell to asking questions about her ; and in an amazing intimacy she was presently telling him things about herself she

had never dreamed of telling any one, things which she seemed to have been but dimly aware of till his divining, sympathetic insight awoke her to a fuller knowledge of them. As she walked home she passed her hand over her eyes twice or thrice, as if she were trying to brush away a dimming drowsiness. It was no use; for the time being she had lost the sense of the proportions of the world. After lunch she went to him as a needle to a magnet. Their talk was in the same intimate strain. Once he said :

"I should like to teach you the Marsh. It's really a kind of book—a book of secrets. You could learn them."

"Well, teach me then," said Dolores, in an almost childish pleasure at his praise.

On her way back she passed again the black-browed village girl, and saw that her face wore a new air; it was anxious and pondering. To her surprise she filled with pleasure and comfort at the sight, and awoke in a panic to the full sense of what this feeling towards a peasant girl about a peasant meant. She could not blink the fact that jealousy implied love; and came back to the true proportions of the world with a vengeance. The thing was sheer lunacy. How could she, Dolores Vesey, let herself fall in love with a man who, for all his uncommon upbringing, was in all the important externals a peasant? She was in a very cold fright; and thanked her stars that she had been awakened to the knowledge of this absurd peril in good time.

She told herself that she must really have been bewitched.

She was glad indeed to have had the spell broken. She thrust scornfully away a doubt in her underthought that the spell was broken, that she might find her strength, her real strength as a woman, already enlisted on the side of Gabriel.

She was restless and ill at ease that evening, and Gabriel was very present in her dreams. The fresh morning air restored her full confidence in herself; she felt that it would be easy to take no further risks; she did not dream of going to the shearing-pen. In the middle of the morning the restlessness again invaded her. The scented garden grew oppressive, and she wandered out along the sands. After a while the Marsh drew her into it, and she took a road which led away from the shearing-pen. Presently she found that the Marsh was even fuller of its disquieting restlessness, or rather of a restless expectancy, to which her under-self responded. It wore on her; she found herself too weak to withstand its obscure, searching appeal. She could not thrust away a terrifying fancy that the powers of the Marsh had their grip on her. She fled from it along the sea-wall to the cool quiet of her room.

She was glad of the respite of lunch; the effort to talk to her father forced her out of herself, and during the afternoon the restlessness had abated. She read peaceably in the garden. After dinner the restlessness returned, and she betook herself to her

hammock and abandoned herself to dreams. She made up her mind that it was safer not to struggle too violently against this odd obsession, lest a hard-won victory should be followed by a violent reaction, and she should in the end have lost ground. It was wiser to accept it quietly and oppose a quiet resistance to it. Her dreams were all of Gabriel, his face was present to her with an insistent vividness.

The church clock had struck eleven ; the lights in the house were out ; when suddenly there came a gentle knocking at the door in the wall of the garden twenty yards from her. Her feet had carried her half-way to it before she knew what she was doing. Then she stopped, cast one look towards the house, went slowly to the door, and opened it.

Gabriel stood on the threshold ; his anxious eyes ashine in the moonlight, on his face the look of a child whose feelings have been wounded. The sight of it struck a pang to Dolores' heart ; and when he said, in a tone of a hurt child, " You did not come to-day," she was almost abject in her excuses.

They came into the garden on to the lawn. A soothing appeasement filled her ; the restlessness, born of the craving to be with him, had gone in a vast content. She forgot the absurdity of his presence. He seemed to have nothing to say ; the sight of her seemed enough for him. They walked to the end of the lawn and turned without a word. Then his hand slid into hers, as a child's hand slides into the hand of its mother, and he began to tell her how her not coming had hurt him. She hardly heard



what he said : the clasp of his hand and the sound of his voice were an intoxication. But she gathered that he had been tortured by an equal restlessness and craving. They walked up and down, murmuring now and again halting words. The mutual ecstasy they awoke in one another seemed to need no expression, to be indeed inexpressible in words. The clasp of his hand seemed to be drawing her out of herself into him. Once he tried to lead her to the garden seat under the trees ; but she held back firmly, saying :

“ No, no ! I like to see your face in the moon-light.”

Mazed in a dream as she was, she knew that a kiss might bind her to him with a bond beyond breaking. They kept to the lawn till the church clock, striking twelve, awoke her from her dream.

“ You must go,” she said.

“ Must I ? ” he said sadly.

“ Yes, yes.”

“ And you will come to-morrow ? ”

“ Yes ; I will come to-morrow,” said Dolores softly.

When she had shut the door behind him she looked at her hand moist from his clasp, and kissed it twice. Then her face turned grave, and she said in an uncertain voice, “ A—a summer fancy. I had better humour it.”

She walked quietly to the house. On the edge of the lawn the sense of eyes on her made her look up, and she saw the dark face of Kiss Aladar at his

attic window. His eyes looked over the garden out to sea.

A faint vexation that there had been a watcher at their tryst filled her. It passed ; and she said :

“ Good-night, Aladar.”

“ Good-night, mistress,” said Aladar.

## II

### THE MIDSUMMER FIRE

Dolores awoke next morning contented and serene. She had found a reasonable and comforting standpoint from which to regard Gabriel's attraction for her ; it was a summer fancy and would pass with the summer. The wise course was to humour it ; resistance might strengthen it, might render it a serious, even dangerous infatuation. This reasonable attitude allowed her to see as much as Gabriel as she wished ; and she let the pleasant exhilaration at the thought flood her soul.

When Francesca came, and in her bustling way made preparations for her mistress's toilet, and above all while she was brushing her hair, Dolores watched her with keen eyes, wondering whether Kiss Aladar had yet told her of Gabriel's presence in the garden the night before. Francesca lacked her wonted flow of chatter ; and once or twice Dolores caught her regarding her with grave eyes. Doubtless Aladar had told her. But Dolores had no fear of the story spreading. Aladar's command of the

English tongue hardly lent itself to gossip ; on Francesca's discretion she could rely.

She did not go to the shearing-pen till the afternoon. Gabriel greeted her with happy eyes, and led the way across the meadow to the shade of a group of alders on the bank of the dyke. They were a little shy of one another at first ; the ecstasy had passed, maybe with the glamour of the moonlit night. But they sat in a joyful content ; and Dolores, at any rate, felt that any moment the ecstasy might return. They were not long finding their tongues, and talked easily of themselves, of one another, of the Marsh, all the while exploring one another's souls, striving unconsciously to attain a closer communion.

That night Gabriel came again to the garden, but they did not walk in it. They went down to the broad, moonlit sands, and walked along the edge of the ebbing sea, either in an infinite pleasure at the other's nearness. When Gabriel again took her hand, the ecstasy returned, and again Dolores felt herself being drawn, as it were, into his being.

During the days which followed she now and again bethought herself of her father's researches, and they talked of the superstitions of the Marsh-folk. But it was not till Midsummer Eve that those researches really claimed her attention again. Awaking very early in the morning, at the turning hour, she heard the iron gates of the garden creak. She slipped out of bed, and in the light of the false dawn saw Francesca and Kiss Aladar coming to the

house. He carried a bunch of herbs in his hand ; and she knew that they had been out in the Marsh to gather the magic herbs which must be plucked before sunrise. The sight reminded her that it was Midsummer Eve ; and that that night the Marsh-folk would burn their bonfire at Studfall Castle, once the Roman port, on the side of Lympne Hill.

When Francesca was brushing her hair, she said, " There's a Midsummer fire at Lympne to-night, Francesca. I'm going to see it ; and I shall want you to go with me. Will you tell Aladar to hire a trap to drive us over ? Do not tell any one about it."

" Yes, mistress," said Francesca ; and Dolores saw that her eyes shone with sudden eagerness, and her face was wreathed with smiles of content. She wondered whether Francesca's delight arose solely from the way having been made easy to her to go to the bonfire. It seemed excessive, since surely her maid had already made her plans to go. She fancied, with some uneasiness, that her own going might be the cause of Francesca's delight. She had not forgotten Francesca's and Aladar's excitement at the sight of Gabriel.

At lunch her father said, " Aladar made an odd request this morning. He asked me if he might have a bottle of Tokay. I found that he wanted it for the Midsummer feast, and told him that he might have a bottle of the old Madeira, since that was the nearest I had to Tokay."

" Last Midsummer we were in a wine country ;

and I expect he found his Midsummer feast with its proper wine ready for him without any need to get it himself," said Dolores ; and she had little doubt that the herbs she had seen in Aladar's hand at dawn were now steeping in the bottle of Madeira.

When she went upstairs to put on her hat, she found Francesca tidying the room after her toilet for lunch, and said, " What did Aladar want that wine for, Francesca ? "

Francesca cast a startled glance at her, hesitated, and said, " At the Midsummer feast there must be wine—the wine of the feast."

" Oh ! Are you and Aladar going to take part in the feast, then ? "

" Yes ; and you too, mistress."

" Certainly not," said Dolores.

Francesca cast an odd, doubting look at her, and said no more.

That afternoon Gabriel said, with a sigh, " I cannot come to the garden to-night. I must go to the bonfire at Lypne. If I do not go, they will be careless about plastering the hoofs of the beasts with mud, and they will be burnt."

" Never mind," said Dolores.

She had not told him that she was going to the bonfire. She wished her presence there to be a surprise to him. She had some thought of waiting till the Marsh-folk had gone, and walking home with him through the Marsh.

" It's very odd," he said presently. " They tell me that that witch-woman from Lyminge is staying

in the Marsh. But perhaps she's only going to the bonfire to get luck—like every one else."

"Probably," said Dolores.

"I don't see that she can do any harm, though she has an evil look. She met me on my way home last night, and talked oddly. Merry Haisell and your maid Francesca were with her."

"Francesca?" cried Dolores.

"Yes. I should think Merry Haisell made them acquainted; though I never knew that she knew the woman from Lyminge."

This news made Dolores faintly uneasy. She had a vague feeling that the conjunction of this trio boded no good; yet what could they do?

"The Lyminge witch can do no harm," she said.

"No," said Gabriel thoughtfully. "Yet she might teach the Marsh-folk the things they used to do at the bonfire in the old days. Dreadful things they were, I've heard, though no one can rightly say what they were. They've forgotten; but the Lyminge woman might know."

"I'm pretty sure that that little wretch Francesca could tell her, though she's never told me," said Dolores.

"Do you think she could? Then there can't be much harm in them. Your maid's just like a kitten," said Gabriel.

"She seems to be," said Dolores, a little doubtfully.

After dinner that night Dolores put on a black lace gown, a dark hat, and a thick veil. She was a

little doubtful of the peasant fire festivals ; and it might turn out that the bonfire at Studfall Castle was the scene of a robustious, primitive revelry unbefitting the presence of a well-bred girl.

Accordingly, she would not start till the late dusk had fallen ; and she was surprised that Francesca, in a quiver of curbed excitement, showed so little impatience to be gone. In the stable yard they found Aladar awaiting them, at the head of a horse harnessed to a dog-cart. Dolores climbed into it, took the reins, and bade Francesca sit beside her. Aladar climbed up behind, and they started. The night was hot and still. Though there was still a red glow in the western sky, a drifting mist from the sea, high above their heads, dimmed the light of the moon, and the Marsh lay in a dusk. Some odd chance of the wind had mingled with its odour of teeming fertility and the fragrance of flowers in the hedges the salt scent of the sea.

Now and again Dolores would say something about their errand ; but for the most part they drove in a silence only broken by the deep voice of Aladar, bidding her take a road to the right or the left. Plainly he had been at the pains to learn thoroughly the way to Lympne. A growing oppression, born of the hot night and simmering Marsh, weighed on Dolores ; and now and again she was aware that a nervous, infecting quivering shook Francesca. An obscure sense that she was drawing near a crisis or climax in her life troubled her. She was glad when they came to the foot of

Lympne Hill, and saw the flare of the bonfire half-way up its side. The dull hum of the Marsh-folk round it came down to them.

They got down from the dog-cart, and Aladar led the horse through an open meadow gate, to the side of the wood which runs up the side of the hill and along its crest. There he fastened it to the top bar of a post and rails in the hedge of the wood, and took a basket from under the seat of the dog-cart. Then they walked up the hill, keeping in the deep shadow of the trees. Some forty yards from the fire Dolores stopped, and said :

“ I will watch it from here. Notice all the customs, Francesca, especially any one which is strange to you.”

“ Yes, mistress,” said Francesca. Aladar set his basket in the dry ditch, and the two of them left her and went forward to the fire.

Some eighty men and women were gathered round it, very cheerful and noisy. Now and again Dolores could see the faces on the further side of the fire ; most of them she did not know. Twice, however, she caught a glimpse of the black-browed village girl and, beside it, of the face of Gabriel. She frowned at the sight. Once she caught a glimpse in profile of the face of the squire of St. Oswald's, and smiled. But for the most part it was a shadow-play against the light of the fire, a play of moving, noisy shadows. Shadows jostled one another, laughing and crying out ; shadows drank together, drawing liquor from a barrel on a handcart. Then



she heard the voice of the squire of St. Oswald's and a woman's voice calling out directions, and slowly method came into the disordered bustle. The shadows joined hands and danced round the fire in a great ring, singing some old Marsh ballads. Now and again she caught snatches of them.

Once the dying fire flared up, and showed her plain in the further side of the ring Gabriel's face, next him on one side the black-browed village girl, on his other hand a big woman with rugged features and deep-set eyes. She guessed that she was the Lyminge witch. Aladar held her other hand ; and next him was Francesca. Then the flare died down ; and the living creatures turned again to dancing shadows. Presently the ring broke, and the shadows were hurling smouldering brands, circles of fire, down the hill. Dolores recognised the old sun charm. Then the shadows began to leap over the fire, now a heap of glowing embers, in couples, a man and woman together, laughing and crying out. There came a lull ; and the shadows stood still, waiting. Suddenly there appeared the shadows of cattle racing down the hill ; and she heard the squealing of pigs and the frightened low of a heifer. Dashing up the sparks, scattering the brands, a shadowy mixed band of cattle, sheep, and pigs tore frantically through the fire and down the hill, pursued by a great shouting from the crowd. The shouting stilled and the shadows hung motionless round the fire, talking and jesting on a lower note ; then they began to drift down the hill, first in twos and

threes, then in a stream. The mist-bank swung clear of the moon, and showed them men and women.

Of what followed, Dolores' remembrance was very misty. She could recall dimly that half a score of the drifting throng slipped away from it to the shadow of the wood, and came to her ; among them Gabriel, overjoyed to see her ; Francesca, the Lyminge woman, and Aladar whispering together ; the black-browed girl scowling at her jealously ; the squire of St. Oswald's, amazed and uneasy at the sight of her ; a gipsy girl and boy, a young farmer, and a shepherd, all in a curious exaltation. The real festival, the esoteric feast, was yet to come ; she was to take part in it. She could remember her reluctance to drink the wine of the feast, the Madeira in which the herbs gathered before sunrise had been steeped, a reluctance overborne by Gabriel's persuasion and her own keen desire to learn the ultimate meaning of the fire festivals. She could remember drinking it ; she could even remember that Francesca had feigned to drink it, and, unperceived, had flung her draught away ; Dolores had felt the spilt wine splash her hand. Then a dimness had come on her ; her grasp on the world had slipped.

When the world came back she was in her room at Pyechurch Manor, in bed ; Francesca was drawing the blinds, and the birds were singing loudly. Her head was aching and throbbing ; the room swam giddily before her eyes. Her cold bath in the middle

of it was deliciously inviting. She slipped out of bed, stumbling giddily, with very stiff limbs, bade Francesca go, and got into it.

It cleared her head of the giddiness, though it still ached. Then, suddenly, she grew frightened, very frightened. She made haste over her bath, began to dress, and rang for Francesca.

When she came Dolores said somewhat breathlessly, "What happened last night after that drugged wine took away my senses?"

"I do not know. I drank too," said Francesca.

"You did not," said Dolores.

"Yes, mistress, I drank," said Francesca; and her face set in the obstinacy Dolores knew well.

"You have behaved very badly—tricking me like that, Francesca. And I have always treated you so well. You ought not to have done it."

"No, no! I did not behave badly to you. It had to be so. Those who come to the great feast must drink the wine of the feast, above all the bride of the horned one. The herbs in it are magical," protested Francesca.

"Well, they've given me a splitting headache; and I can't remember a thing that happened, I can't remember what silly mummeries I took part in; and I wanted to know them above everything. You'll have to tell me all about it—exactly."

Francesca shook her head, and said slowly:

"What happens at the feast has to happen; but it may not be told."

"Well, what do you mean by the bride of the

horned one? Who is the horned one? Who is his bride?" cried Dolores.

Francesca shook her head.

"Oh, this mystery about these time-honoured mummeries is silly and tiresome beyond words!" cried Dolores.

"Silly? Oh, if you knew!" cried Francesca, and stopped short.

"Well, tell me," said Dolores.

Francesca shook her head.

Dolores lost her patience. She scolded, threatened, implored, and cajoled her tongue-tied maid; she tried to bribe her; all to no purpose. She was struggling against some intimate, deep-rooted superstition, and against (she fancied) some other fear. At last she abandoned hope of unsealing her lips, and as she came out of the room she said:

"I do not like you at all, Francesca."

She went to breakfast with an aching head, in a bitter annoyance at her failure to learn the secret of the Midsummer fires; once or twice she quivered with her fear. After breakfast she went to her hammock in the garden and tried to force out of her mind some of the happenings the drugged wine had locked in it. Presently she was aware that she had suffered a change; it seemed to her that she had risen to an emotional climax and fallen into a reaction. Gabriel, his attraction for her, their summer idyll, seemed faint and far away. Presently the Midsummer madness of it all grew very plain to her, and she fell into yet another panic. She would

not see Gabriel again ; indeed, she did not want to. She would get away from Pyechurch at once ; she would go to her grandmother and take her fill of the pleasures of the end of the London Season.

With her, to resolve was to act. She slipped out of her hammock, went into the house, bade Francesca pack, and order a carriage to take them and their luggage to the station. Then she went to her father, who was working with his secretary in the study, and told him of her intention. It seemed to him very natural. Then she gave him an account of the bonfire at Studfall Castle ; and the three of them worked upon it for an hour, getting every custom exact. As she drove across the Marsh to the station, she found that its influence on her had passed. She could believe that it had never had any.

The Countess of Sudlington welcomed her with delight ; her granddaughter's nomadic life, her so frequent withdrawal from the English polite world, was a perpetual grievance with her. Dolores plunged into the whirl with a zest somewhat foreign to her nature and intelligence. She found the endless exactions of pleasure actually restful after the stress of her infatuation for Gabriel. The week for which she had gone became two, then three ; Gabriel and the Marsh grew fainter and fainter. Then in the middle of the fourth week she came out from a dance in a house in Park Lane into a still July dawn. As she settled back in the brougham, a waft of air fragrant with the scent of the flowers in the Park breathed in upon her ; and she was

smitten with a sudden craving for Gabriel and the wide stretches of the Marsh. London turned stale, empty, wearisome; and the craving grew. She struggled against it, striving to crush it. Midsummer had gone, its madness should go with it. She fell asleep, struggling against it, and awoke with the craving stronger on her, more urgent with her than ever. Gabriel's image was an obsession, filling her mind. All the morning she fought against the desire to go to him; resistance seemed only to strengthen it; and in the afternoon the resistance broke. She caught the four o'clock train to Hythe. As she drove across the Marsh in the sunset she found that it had regained its old, urgent appeal to her; a thrilling exaltation at the thought of seeing Gabriel filled her; she wondered if he would hear of her return, and come to the garden that night.

Her father was pleased, indeed, to see her. At dinner he told her of the progress of his work, and she told him of her month in London.

After dinner, as she went into the drawing-room, Francesca followed her with a white, anxious face, shut the door, and said:

"The poor Signor Gabriel! He is sick! Oh, very sick! It is of the lungs—pneumonia. It comes of their throwing him into the water after the feast."

"Throwing him into the water?" cried Dolores.

"Yes; they said it was part of the ceremonies—the Lyminge woman said it."

"Dolts! Idiots! The rain-charm belongs to

the Spring festival, not to the Midsummer!" cried Dolores.

"I told them! Yes, I told them! But they would not listen to me. The Lyminge witch would have it so; and they were mad," said Francesca, wringing her hands.

"Is he very ill?" said Dolores, her face now paler than her maid's.

"Very ill. They think he will die."

"Very well. I'm glad you came to me at once," said Dolores. "Go to his home and ask how he is."

Francesca went. Dolores went into the garden, and paced up and down in an anguish. The thought of Gabriel's danger wrenched at her heart-strings. Grief and terror racked her. She reproached herself for her flight to London, for throwing away the hours, last hours, she might have spent with him. She made no doubt that he would die, and paced up and down in a dry-eyed despair.

Francesca came in an hour with the tidings that there was no change, that he was very near death. Dolores raged that she had no claim to be with him; then despair took her again. She paced up and down till for sheer weariness she betook herself to bed. She tossed in a fever for two hours; then the relieving tears came, and she sobbed herself into a heavy sleep. She awoke at dawn in a dull despair, bathed, dressed, went out into the garden and paced drearily up and down.

Just before seven o'clock Francesca hurried out into the garden and said :

"The Signora Burdon wants you, mistress. She is in the drawing-room."

Dolores went in through the French windows and found Gabriel's mother, gaunt, haggard, and stern, awaiting her. Mrs. Burdon gave her a look of grim hostility ; but said in a civil, restrained, but hardly hopeful voice :

"I have come to you about my son. He is dying, and he keeps asking for you. Will you come to him ? "

"At once," said Dolores, and led the way out of the house, snatching a garden hat from a peg in the hall as she passed through it.

Mrs. Burdon crossed the road and took a foot-path across the Marsh. She went quickly ; and twice she stumbled with the weariness born of many sleepless nights. They said nothing, and kept looking at one another with curious, searching eyes. Dolores saw plainly enough that Mrs. Burdon was a gentlewoman ; her air, her carriage, the voice in which she had spoken left her in no doubt about it. Mrs. Burdon was even more surprised ; she had expected to find a silly, idle coquette ; and the beauty and distinction of Dolores' pale, haggard face showed her that she had been mistaken indeed.

Dolores' throat was dry, her eyes were aching. The glorious, teeming fertility of the Marsh in the morning sun angered her. She hated Nature



for her callous indifference to their suffering. At last she said huskily :

“ Is he—is he really dying ? ”

“ He has only the shadow of a chance,” said Mrs. Burdon, in a voice of quiet despair. Then she broke out : “ What have you done to my boy ? What have you done to him ? Why does he keep calling for you ? Why did he rave always of you in his delirium, and never a word of me ? Where did you meet him ? How did you come to know him ? ”

“ We met in the Marsh,” said Dolores.

“ And what, oh, what happened on Lympne Hill ? ” cried Mrs. Burdon.

“ I don’t know what happened—the wine was drugged,” said Dolores drearily.

“ The wine ? What wine ? What were you doing there ? How came you to be together at Lympne Hill ? At night, too ? ”

“ I went with my maid—to see the bonfire—oh, it’s a long story. I’ll tell it you some day—if he doesn’t die, and it’s any use,” said Dolores.

“ Mystery on mystery ! But you’re right. It’s of no importance now,” said Mrs. Burdon ; and her voice broke.

They said no more on the way to the cottage. Dolores followed Mrs. Burdon up the rude staircase, and into the little bedroom. Her eyes flew to Gabriel on the bed, and, oh, how changed a Gabriel ! The splendid virility which had made him the living embodiment of the fertile Marsh

had gone. His drawn, waxen face was marked with blue shadows ; his eyelids seemed transparent, they were so thin and blue.

Dolores went quietly to the bed, knelt down, and kissed his pale lips. As she kissed them she thrilled to the knowledge that she had kissed them before. Very slowly, almost painfully, his eyelids unclosed ; his eyes were seconds taking in her face ; their weak indifference changed to a faint, glad light of recognition, and she saw his soundless lips form her name. She took his hand and held it in her warm clasp. Slowly his nerveless fingers bent round hers, and she felt the faintest grip. His eyelids sank slowly over his eyes. She knelt very still, watching his face, throbbing to the faint, slow flutter of his pulse. At the end of some twenty minutes she fancied that the blue shadows on his face were not so deep, that his fluttering pulse was a little steadier.

Mrs. Burdon had leaned against the wall, watching him ; she bent down and whispered :

" He is asleep. Can you stay ? You've done him good. You should be here when he wakes."

" I can stay," said Dolores.

All through the hot hours she sat beside him, unstirring, holding his hand. Now and again his mother raised him with infinite gentleness and gave him milk and brandy. She brought Dolores tea and food. Gabriel sometimes seemed to sleep, sometimes he was plainly hovering in a land between sleeping and waking. But now, when his eyes

opened on Dolores' face, the light of recognition kindled in them more quickly. She had a fancy that her fresh, young vitality was passing into him through her hand.

It was noon when Mrs. Burdon said, in a hushed, breathless voice :

"Look, the shadow has passed. He will not die."

She leaned against the wall, sobbing weakly.

"Hush!" said Dolores softly. "He is asleep again."

At three the doctor came. He looked at Gabriel and felt his pulse ; then he said softly :

"Good ; he will do. I wouldn't have believed it."

Dolores, who had risen to make room for him, stood holding herself up with one hand against the wall, and easing her cramped, aching limbs. At his words the blood rushed through her veins, flushing her white face, and banishing the pain. As the doctor stepped back she took her place again, again clasping Gabriel's hand.

The doctor went softly, and Mrs. Burdon with him. Dolores heard him giving her instructions in the room below. Then she came back slowly, walked softly to the bed, and gazed hungrily down on her son.

Presently she raised grudging, hostile eyes to Dolores' face, and said in a harsh whisper :

"But what are you reviving him to ? I took him away from the world—the luxury and the

greed. I gave him a free, wholesome life—a man's life. And the world has found him out, and ruined him. Why couldn't you leave him alone? When he found you gone he was wretched—heart-broken. That gave the pneumonia its grip on him. You're reviving him to a life you've spoiled."

"No: I shall marry him," said Dolores quietly.

## THE RESURGENT MYSTERIES

DURING the six generations for which the history of the family is known, the Wiltons have been Tories and High-Churchmen. There is no reason to doubt that in their prehistoric times they were Tories and High-Churchmen, too, down possibly to the very days of Laud himself. During that part of the eighteenth century covered by the family's records, and during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, they held comfortable livings in the country or in the more reputable towns—towns unsmirched by factories, the abodes of gentlefolk. Their old age was, for the most part, spent in the retirement of a Cathedral Close, where several of them attained to the rank of canon, two of them to the rank of dean. None of the family ever rose to the rank of bishop, a failure which their enemies (if they can be said to have enemies, perhaps I should rather say those who envy them) ascribe to their lack of conspicuous ability; their friends, to their lack of push. The Tractarian Movement, though it brought no adherent to Rome from the Wiltons, since their sturdy Toryism prevented so thorough a break with the family tradition, nevertheless lifted them somewhat out of the groove

along which they had moved for five generations ; and it became the custom for a Wilton, on being ordained at the close of his university career, to become a curate in a slum in one of the more bloated towns, and work for two or three years among the very poor. The father and two of the uncles of Aloysius Wilton had followed this course ; and when the time came Aloysius himself became a curate in the parish of Little St. Barnabas, on the Poplar side of Stepney.

It is to be doubted that Nature intended Aloysius for the Church at all. If she did, assuredly she intended him for the Church in the country. He stood six feet three in his stockings ; he had gained his Blue for both cricket and football at Oxford ; and had he thought it in keeping with his future calling, he might, with unusual ease, have been the amateur heavy-weight boxing champion. On taking orders, he had put these forms of the expression of his simple and direct personality behind him ; and the sacrifice was doubtless the more regarded in that he made it cheerfully. Indeed, he was always of a cheerful spirit ; and his smiling, fresh-coloured, freckled face and great bulk made him a remarkable figure in the sordid Stepney slums, where life goes a somewhat cheerless and stunted gait.

Aloysius, however, was inclined to regard his admirable body with a certain distress ; he could not but feel that it was out of keeping with the more emaciated Anglican ideal. His curly hair, too, was hardly less of a trial to him, since by no efforts

could he constrain it to the decent lankiness which has to some degree become an outward sign of a devout spirit. He could never be sure what unbecoming appearance it would next assume ; and worst of all, two little curly tufts on each side of his forehead had a most discomfiting habit of standing up like horns.

For all that his bulk and strength and his prevailing rude health distressed him somewhat whenever he gave thought to them, these gifts were of the greatest service to him. The population of the parish of Little St. Barnabas ebbs and flows ; sometimes it is ten thousand, sometimes twelve thousand souls. The spiritual needs of the bulk of these souls were in the care of Aloysius, his vicar, and Riley, his fellow-curate. The homes of dissent are few in the parish of Little St. Barnabas—fewer, indeed, than in many country towns of five thousand inhabitants, because its people are too poor to support the incumbents of chapels. On the other hand, it is uncommonly rich in heathen, not only in the practical heathen whose myriads crowd the slums of all our great cities, but also in the technical heathen from the East and South. Ethnologists, indeed, and the students of comparative religion who go to the East to study their problems on the spot, might obtain a far greater and far more striking variety of facts in the parish of Little St. Barnabas at a vast saving of travelling expenses.

The actual regular flock which attends the church itself is small, rarely exceeding three hundred and

fifty members ; but its clergy minister to the sick, succour the poor, and comfort the afflicted, with little regard to their religious opinions. Hence it comes about that they have made for themselves ten times as much work as they can possibly do. The admirable body of Aloysius enabled him to do twice as much of it as his two colleagues together ; and his cheerful and abounding vitality was often of more use in a sick-room than many drugs. But his colleagues, ascetics by temperament and conforming in appearance far more closely to the Anglican ideal, could never grow quite easy in their minds, any more than could Aloysius himself, about his bodily gifts. They were alive to their great usefulness ; they admired his courage, endurance, and cheerfulness ; they were even assured of his devout fondness for the Anglican ritual ; but they could not free their minds of doubts of his real spiritual fitness for his office. Then of a sudden it became plain that he was exercising an amazing influence over the heathen within their gates, and their doubts fled.

This influence first became plain after a hard-fought fight between Aloysius and Thick Higgins, a notorious bully of the district. Aloysius came upon him one evening in Stephen's Street, dragging along Katusha, the little Jewish interpreter who made known to the outer world the wants and desires of the families of the more benighted Russian tribes settled in the parish of Little St. Barnabas. It had occurred to Thick Higgins that her steady



earnings would make an agreeable addition to his precarious income, and he was taking her home with him by way of beginning their partnership. Katusha was weeping and imploring the help of a crowd whose sympathy with her was much weaker than its dread of Thick Higgins, when Aloysius thrust through it, and bade him let her be. Higgins refused in words which do not lend themselves to print, and Aloysius scragged him with amazing promptness. Higgins loosed Katusha (he had to) and a savage fight followed. Aloysius, though he knew his parish, at first fought faithfully under the Queensberry rules; when he found that his opponent was fighting entirely by the light of nature, his plain English common sense asserted itself, with the result that Thick Higgins was presently taken to the East London Hospital suffering from a broken leg, two broken ribs, and a dislocated shoulder.

The vicar chanced upon the victor coming away from the fray, followed by an admiring crowd, and being a man of some little fancy he told Riley, his other curate, that Aloysius, with his face alive with berserk fury, and his hair standing up like two horns over his forehead, reminded him of the god Thor returning to Asgard after a battle. He added as an afterthought, "surrounded by a crowd of trolls." The crowd was not, indeed, of any such malignant composition; but there were in it a number of Lascars and Finns, the persons of all others in the parish most given to minding their own business and least given to swelling crowds.

On the Sunday after this notable victory, at the morning service, or, as the clergy of Little St. Barnabas themselves call it, High Mass, some of the pews at the back of the church held foreigners. In one there were some little Russians, in another some Finns, and in another, stranger still, some Lascars. These rare visitants behaved with unruffled propriety, and Marriott, the lay helper, an Oxford man, who looked after the end of the church, declared at lunch that none of them had eyes or attention for anyone or anything but Aloysius and his doings. At the end of the service the Lascars filed out in their noiseless Eastern fashion, but the Finns and Russians were talking to one another with the liveliest excitement. The vicar, supposing that an idle passing curiosity had brought them to the church, gave the matter no more thought.

During the next week Aloysius saw more of Katusha than usual. She was always more or less in touch with the clergy of Little St. Barnabas, for her intimate acquaintance with the lives of the more primitive dwellers in the parish brought to her knowledge many cases of sickness and distress which the sufferers, in the bonds of a strange tongue, had found no way of making known. When, in hard times, she had exhausted the charitable resources of the Jews in relieving the more acute suffering she had discovered, she came for aid to the Christians ; and the clergy of Little St. Barnabas had come to regard her with great liking and respect as a most trustworthy and valuable helper. The vicar,

indeed, had, to her great amusement, made a serious endeavour to convert her to Christianity. She was a curious fine flower of the race to find growing on this East End dunghill—slim and pale, with large, appealing eyes, in which the vicar, a man of no little fancy, declared that he saw reflection of her race's centuries of suffering, her face, set in a frame of soft, waving hair, was a pure oval, and informed with a virginal innocence and candour beyond words gracious and delightful.

But for all that she had this face of a painter's dream, Katusha lived the strenuous life. She was a thrifty, hard-working creature who, out of her earnings as interpreter and letter-writer to the tongue-bound and illiterate Russians and Finns, kept her old mother and herself in a condition of decent comfort. They had, indeed, save when some starveling waif of Katusha's finding shared it with them, a whole room to themselves. She exacted her small fees from those who could afford to pay them with the utmost businesslike severity. Her work and her charity, her influence with the magistrate as police-court interpreter, and with the relieving officer, and her connection with the clergy, made her by far the most important woman in the parish of Little St. Barnabas. Her untiring efforts to succour the unfortunate had won her no little affection among a people whose life is far too hard to lend itself to undue indulgence in the softer emotions.

During the week after the first attendance of the heathen at Little St. Barnabas, Katusha sought

out Aloysius four times and carried him off on errands of mercy. By the end of the week he had fallen into the way of talking to her on their way in a cheery and comrade-like fashion. Besides these four errands he came upon her at least another dozen times in the course of his work, and, if he was not in haste, stopped and talked to her about the unfortunates she had brought to his notice. On the next Sunday nine pews were filled with heathen; the number of the Finns and Russians had trebled, and the band of Lascars had grown to a score. Among the Finns were a man and woman of a family which had been deported for sorcery, so the story ran in the Russian slums of the parish, on the requisition of the Bishop of Helsingfors himself. Katusha told Aloysius that they still practised the black art in their house in Palmer's Street. She seemed to think it the most natural thing in the world.

During the next few weeks the number of the heathen grew and grew until they filled all the back pews of Little St. Barnabas. They watched the service with grave decorum, and imitated the movements of the Christian worshippers. At least the Russians and Finns did; the Lascars sat impassive from beginning to end. Marriott, the lay helper, still maintained that they had only eyes for Aloysius. One Sunday, at their late supper, he made the curious statement that the bulk of the Russians and Finns understood something of the ritual. The vicar said that that was

doubtless owing to its likeness to the ritual of the Greek Church. Marriott said he did not believe it, that most of these benighted ones, the Finns at any rate, had certainly no understanding of the Greek ritual; that he had made up his mind that what they understood were those portions of the Anglican ritual which have come down through Romanism and paganism from the religions of primitive man. The vicar denied with some heat that there were any such portions, and something of a wrangle followed. But no one attached any great weight to Marriott's opinion; he was not an Anglican, but an altruist of doubtful faith, who was devoting himself to the poor out of a passion for humanity, a very useful helper, but incompetent to discuss matters of religion.

During those weeks it became plain that Katusha had given up calling on the vicar for aid; now she always addressed herself to Aloysius. Little by little a comradeship grew up between them. She even fell into the way of consulting him about her rare business troubles; and twice, by dint of explaining to him by signs that he would thrash him if he did not, he made a reluctant client pay her the fees he owed. One night while they were sitting up with a child she had found dying of starvation, and nourishing it at prescribed intervals, she told him of her life as a child on the border of Finland, where she had lived till she was twelve, and gained that knowledge of the Finnish and Russian dialects from which she made her living.

Little by little they fell into a way of doing much of their work among the sick together ; and presently, from being seen so often together passing along the streets on their errands, they became associated in people's minds. About this time, too, Aloysius found himself dogged at nights as he went about his work. It seemed to him that a little band of Lascars and Finns, some half-dozen, followed him wherever he went. They were not always the same Lascars and Finns. He did not quickly or easily persuade himself of this. Then a not infrequent event in the lives of the clergy of Little St. Barnabas proved that this band did follow him, and proved, moreover, that it followed him as a bodyguard. One night he was coming along one of the slums, when three violent Swedish sailors, who knew not Aloysius or his fists, fell upon him. Aloysius was thumping them with a proper regard to their drunken condition, when there was a rush of feet ; the little band of Finns and Lascars were upon them, and the three sailors were knocked senseless before Aloysius could save them. Their assailants, their task done, fled as quickly as they had come ; and Aloysius, having satisfied himself that the thickness of the Swedes' skulls had prevented any serious injury, went on his way, bidding the first policeman he met give an eye to the victims. When at breakfast the next morning he told his colleagues of his adventure, Marriott said : " Your heathen have taken you under their

protection. It looks as if they had elected you chief."

Meeting Katusha later in the day, Aloysius asked if she knew anything about it. She said with a somewhat constrained air: "Yes; they guard you. It is good. You go often where no coppers go."

"But why do these particular people, these Finns and Lascars, guard me?" said Aloysius.

Katusha only shook her head; she would say no word on that matter.

A few days later Aloysius was smoking a restful pipe in his sitting-room, when the servant ushered in Bungay, an old Hindu interpreter, who has lived so long in the parish of Little St. Barnabas that it is to be doubted that even he himself remembers his Hindu name. He is at all times a very shuffling old man, and on this occasion his manner was of the most suspicious. He set down on the table a large bunch of bananas and two small parcels, and said hurriedly, shuffling back to the door: "The wife of Bhopal Dass send you this rice and ghi and fruit, and pray you look favourably on her in her trouble. She want son."

"Here! What do you mean? What does she mean? What's her trouble?" cried Aloysius.

Bungay was already out of the door. He stuck in his head, said, "She have baby next week," and fled.

Aloysius laughed a little ruefully at this new, odd function suddenly thrust on him. He was for



returning the offerings at once, when the temptation assailed him to take them to a hungry family to whom they would indeed be a godsend. After all, Bhopal Dass must be earning good wages, or his wife would not be able to spend eighteenpence on offerings. He took them to the hungry family. Coming back he met Marriott, and told him of the visit of Bungay. Marriott opened his eyes wide, and walked along with him for some way without saying anything; then he laughed shortly, and said: "Really, you know, it's too odd. Of course, it's utter nonsense."

"What is?" said Aloysius.

"Oh, an idea of mine. You wouldn't believe it. I don't myself; for, after all, this *is* London, and it *is* the twentieth century."

"You're as bad as Katusha, and the matter of the bodyguard. This making a mystery of things is rather tiresome," said Aloysius.

"You'd think my idea nonsense; I do myself," said Marriott hastily. Then he added, in the tone of one thinking aloud, "Yet it would explain that puzzling attendance at church."

Then for a time nothing fresh happened, save that one Sunday, when Aloysius had been called away to help celebrate Mass at an Aldgate church, the curates of which had fallen ill, the heathen filed quietly out of Little St. Barnabas as soon as it became plain that he was not there.

At the beginning of June began a spell of glorious hot weather. Unfortunately, a spell of glorious



hot weather in the parish of Little St. Barnabas, though the warmth alone loosens the grip of poverty, brings with it a grievous increase of sickness among the babies and children. The workers were sorely tried by the press of work in the heat, and even Aloysius felt the strain. He saw that Katusha, too, was growing paler, and found her nervous and apt to grow absent-minded, to all seeming rapt suddenly away into some urgent train of thought.

Once, asking her what ailed her, he caught her off her guard. "Oh!" she cried impatiently, "that Finn witch troubles me."

"What's that? How does she trouble you?" said the astonished Aloysius.

But Katusha would say no more. Aloysius pressed her to tell him, and let him see if he could find a way to prevent it. She only looked at him oddly, and shook her head.

A few days later he was coming along Palmer's Street. On your right hand, as you come up it, is a row of tall eighteenth-century houses, once the abode of merchants and master mariners, now a warren of the poor. The sudden feeling that eyes were on him made him look up; and he saw, sitting at an open window on the first floor of the fourth house in the row, Katusha and the Finn woman who had been deported for sorcery. He met their eyes, fixed on him with a curious earnestness; and the picture impressed itself on his mind with a strange suddenness and vividness

of detail. He saw that Katusha's lips were parted, that the setting sun had warmed her pale cheeks with its glow, that the Finn woman's eyes were shining exultantly, that her hand was raised to her breast as though she made the sign of the cross. For a breath they grew dim figures seen in a dream ; then Katusha waved her hand. The spell was broken, and he came back to the life of day. He raised his hat, and smiled up at her ; but as he went on his way, he was invaded and oppressed by an odd fancy that there was something wrong about the sight he had seen.

When he met Katusha on the morrow, he asked her why she visited the witch, if the witch troubled her.

"She troubles me not any more. She is all right. We have agreed," said Katusha ; and he thought that there was a strange ring in her soft voice, and wondered at the sudden deep flush which flamed in her cheeks. He liked it ; he was surprised at the pleasure it gave him.

Then she added : "She has medicine very good for sick children. It is of plants."

Aloysius was not satisfied by the statement. Again and again during the next few days the vivid picture of the two figures at the window came into his mind, and always filled him with a deep but vague uneasiness. He began to fear that overwork in the heat was making him fanciful.

On the 23rd of June, the Eve of St. John, the vicar and Riley, tired out by their work among

the sick children, left the conduct of the evening service to Aloysius. Between luncheon and the service he found no time to eat anything; and after it, he came out of the church door faint and hungry and very, very thirsty. At the church door he found Katusha waiting for him with the news that he was needed at once in Palmer's Street. With a sigh for his waiting supper, he turned and went with her. They went quickly, and he gathered that he was needed by a sick woman. There were the usual groups about in Palmer's Street, but before the door of the fourth of the tall houses there was a much larger group. At the sight of Aloysius and Katusha a hush fell on it; and it was quite silent as they passed through it into the house. Katusha led the way up the stairs to the second floor, and knocked at a door. In the pause Aloysius heard the men who had been standing on the pavement filing into the house. Then a woman in the room said something in a strange tongue, and Katusha opened the door and motioned to him to enter. He went in, and found himself in a room of fair size, looking the larger for its bareness, and dimly lighted by a candle. The air of it was laden with the pungent fragrance of some strange incense. By the little table on the other side of the room stood the Finn woman. As Aloysius entered, she made a step forward, fell on her knees, and bowing her head till she nearly touched the floor with her forehead, poured forth a stream of words in a high, chanting key.

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Aloysius was taken aback, and he stared stupidly from the kneeling woman to Katusha and back again.

"What is she saying? Tell her to get up," he said.

Katusha looked timidly at the woman, but said nothing.

"What is she saying?" said Aloysius more sharply. He found the heavy, pungent air oppressing him.

"She give you honour," said Katusha in a hushed voice.

"Look here, what does she want? Where's the sick woman? Tell her to stop," cried Aloysius, almost querulously.

"Presently—very soon," said Katusha.

Aloysius stooped and lifted the woman to her feet. He found that she was trembling with violent excitement; and her shining eyes were almost frenzied.

"What's all this? What did you bring me here for?" he said, turning to Katusha.

"It's all right. You see soon," said Katusha; and of a sudden he saw that she was very pale and in as violent an excitement as the Finn woman.

Then the heavy, fragrant air took hold of him with a daze; a deep shadow, filling the room, dimmed the candle to his eyes; he passed his hand over them, and swayed unsteadily. The shadow cleared, and he saw the Finn woman pouring liquor from a jug into a glass; she brought it to him, and thrust it into his hand.

Katusha laid a hand on his arm and said, " Drink ; it do you good."

An enticing, strange fragrance rose from the liquor, and Aloysius was very thirsty. He thought for a moment of foul play ; but Katusha had bidden him drink. He sipped. The liquor was cool and delicious. Then he drank. He had taken three draughts, and nearly emptied the tumbler, when the woman snatched it from him and handed it to Katusha. Katusha took it and gazed at it for a breath, as if in doubt ; then she raised her eyes to Aloysius. They seemed to grow resolute as she gazed, and she drank. Something in her air gave Aloysius the impression that her drinking was an act of grave meaning, and he cried : " Look here, Katusha, what does it all mean ? What did you bring me here for ? "

She leaned back against the wall and closed her eyes. Her arms hung down straight and nerveless by her side ; the tumbler fell from her nerveless hand. The corners of her lips drooped, and for a breath her face was the face of one who has made a sacrifice and for the while repents.

Aloysius stared at her, bewildered. Of a sudden a flood of strange, delightful warmth flowed through his body ; a rosy mist filled the room ; Katusha's eyes opened, shining with tears and appealing. He laughed loud in a groundless exultation. Then everything swam before his eyes, the figures of Katusha and the Finn woman seemed to swell to superhuman size, to waver and

recede ; the world slipped away, and he knew no more.

He knew no more until he found himself walking along Church Street, fifty yards from the vicarage, in the bright, clean light of the early morning. His head throbbed and ached, his throat pained him, as if he had been shouting for hours ; his legs were unsteady ; and he was parched with thirst. His mind was in a dull confusion ; he knew nothing of how he came there ; his only thought was to get home.

He stumbled along to the vicarage door, let himself in, and stumbled upstairs to his bedroom. His first act was to drain the water-bottle. Then he undressed with fumbling fingers, put on his dressing-gown, and went to the bathroom. He could not wait for the bath to fill, but made haste to get his forehead under the tap. The cold water was very grateful. When the bath was filled, he lay still in the refreshing water, while the throbbing and aching of his head lessened and lessened. Then he rubbed himself into a fine glow, and turned very drowsy. He went to bed, and slept for six hours.

When he awoke his head still ached a little ; and as he dressed and made his breakfast, he tried to call to mind the happenings of the night. He remembered going with Katusha to the Finn woman's house, and how they had drunk the strange liquor ; he could recall its strange fragrance and flavour, and the strange, exhilarating flood

of warmth it set flowing through him. He remembered Katusha's eyes very plainly. There his memory ceased, and rack it as he might he could recall no more. He put the matter out of his mind, resolving that he would have the truth from Katusha, and went on with his breakfast. He was surprised to find himself so little hungry, seeing that he could remember eating nothing since luncheon the day before; he might have supped heavily for all the appetite he had.

As he went about his work, his mind, now that he no longer racked it, gave him now and again a blurred and hazy memory of the night—once a memory of a ring of faces of exultant, drunken men and women singing, once a memory of Katusha clinging to him. The brief glimpses of the faces that came to him showed them all foreign. Once in the afternoon he chanced on one of the many views of the Thames at the end of a slum, and as he paused to look at it, he had a sudden impression of men yelling, "Yarilo! Yarilo! Yarilo!" with frenzied vehemence—an impression so vivid that he turned sharply to look for them. As he turned, his hearing cleared, and he heard only the noises of the slum.

All through the day he looked for Katusha, but found her nowhere. He neither met her, nor had she visited any of the sick children under their common care. He did not get back to the vicarage till nearly dinner-time. He found Marriott in the common room, and at once began to un-

burden himself of his story ; and Marriott was soon listening with the liveliest interest. He did not interrupt, but as soon as Aloysius had done, he began to ask questions, one or two of them most discomfiting. When Aloysius told him of his fancy that he had heard men yelling " Yarilo ! " he banged his hand down on the table and cried : " The key-word ! The absolute key-word ! "

But he would not any the more give Aloysius his explanation of what had happened. He said it was only a rather mad idea of his, and there might be nothing in it.

" Well, at any rate, you can tell me what Yarilo means," growled Aloysius, whose temper was for the while soured.

" Yarilo was probably a deity of the primitive Slavs ; but we don't really know for certain," said Marriott.

" Look here, have I got mixed up in any sort of devil-worship ? " said Aloysius.

" Oh, no ; nothing so modern or so vulgar ; there's no doubt of that. But I must be off and get a bath and change," said Marriott ; and he went hastily to the door.

" Well, I shall get it out of Katusha," said Aloysius.

" That I'm sure you won't," said Marriott, with a queer laugh, and he went.

On the morrow there was an undiminished attendance of heathen at Little St. Barnabas. On Monday morning, having failed to find Katusha anywhere during the day, Aloysius went to the



house where she lived. At his knock her mother came to the door of their room, with her finger on her lips, and said, "She ill; she sleep."

Aloysius was forced to possess his soul in patience. He sent the doctor to her; and the doctor told him that her illness was only a passing weakness, due probably to the heat. Aloysius sent her some fruit every day. Little by little his disquiet and curiosity about his adventure on the Eve of St. John began to lessen. Then on the Thursday afternoon he chanced upon Katusha in the street. At the sight of him her face flamed a vivid scarlet, and then faded to a deeper pallor. They shook hands, and he found that she was trembling; at the touch of her hand he was seized by a violent desire to pick her up and kiss her. It amazed and shocked him; for both as an athlete and as a hard-living curate, he had had a healthy carelessness of the charms of women.

They walked along the street, both very ill at ease, stammering disjointed questions and answers. Then as his wits cleared after the shock of the sudden temptation, Aloysius saw that Katusha had suffered a change; she seemed, during her illness or her rest, to have grown more beautiful; her skin had a finer lustre; its pallor was warmer; her eyes were brighter; her lips were redder; her voice seemed deeper and richer. It might have been a real change, it might have been his fancy, born of his sudden discovery that he would like to kiss her.

They walked along, each timid of the other, talking of the sick children without being clearly aware of what they said, till they came to a quieter street. Then Aloysius said, "Tell me what happened after I drank that curious drink on Friday night."

Katusha did not start or look ill at ease; she was plainly ready for the question. She rather gained the composure she had been lacking, and looking at him with eyes of a limpid innocence, said: "I do not know. I drank, too."

"Oh, yes; but you drank ever so much less than I did. Besides, you knew what would happen if we drank."

Katusha's lips set rather obstinately, and she said: "I went into dream. You went into dream."

"That's all very well, but what sort of dream?" said Aloysius.

"I do not know," said Katusha.

From this standpoint she would not budge; no questioning drew from her another gleam of light on the matter. Yet Aloysius felt that she knew more, much more. He made up his mind that he must grow content with his ignorance; the Finn woman would certainly not speak, even had she not been safe behind the barrier of her strange tongue.

He parted from Katusha in some anger, and it was some time before they worked together again in their old comradeship. Aloysius was chiefly to blame for this. The amazing desire to pick

her up and kiss her when he met her after his strange and unknown adventures at the house of the Finn woman had frightened him not a little. He feared its recurrence, and found that he had reason for the fear. Twice or thrice it did recur; therefore, for the while he shunned her. He did not find it easy to shun her. It was not only that he needed her actual aid in his work, he needed also her comradeship, the stimulation of it. He told himself that his fear was foolish; that it was one thing to want to kiss her and quite another to do anything so wrong. He sought her out; and they went on working together. The desire to pick her up and kiss her did recur; indeed, it recurred often. Aloysius was very firm with it. He regarded it as his thorn in the flesh. Several times he again asked her what had happened at the Finn woman's house on the Eve of St. John. Always she flushed; always she said that she did not know. He found that she was growing more beautiful; he thought her most beautiful when she flushed to that question. Sometimes when she flushed, the desire to hold her in his arms came on him with such a violence that he realised at last that it was dangerous to ask about that night; and he asked no more.

Little by little, in the stress of his work, his disquiet and curiosity about his doings on the Eve of St. John died away. He said nothing of his adventure to the vicar; for it seemed to his practical good sense that nothing could come of doing so;

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it would only add to that good man's abundant worries. But though his curiosity died away, the unbroken attendance of the heathen at Little St. Barnabas kept that night in his mind. Two or three times, also, he found himself called upon to act as judge in disputes between dwellers in the Russian slums, and once in a quarrel between two Lascars. He took it as all in the day's work ; it kept them out of the police court. But he was a little astonished to find that his judgments were accepted without question. In a somewhat exasperating fashion Marriott congratulated him on the success with which he discharged his double function.

Then in the middle of September Katusha suddenly disappeared. She went away one afternoon with her mother, telling no one where she was going, giving no reason for her going. The clergy of Little St. Barnabas missed her sorely ; they found themselves out of touch with that part of their flock whose needs were at once the greatest and the most difficult to come at. For his part, Aloysius missed her most of all ; he was amazed to find what a gap her going had left in his life. Robbed of her stimulating and untiring companionship, he found that his work lost much of its interest. What was worse, it lost in value ; and at last he realised how great a difference that quiet helper, undismayed by difficulties, endowed with the splendid patience and endurance of her race, had made to it ; how her delightful face

and nature had thrown a mist of beauty, for him at any rate, over the squalor of its sphere.

He strove in vain to get news of her. No one knew anything. As a last resource, he went to the Finn woman in Palmer's Street. She showed herself almost abject before him; he saw very clearly that he had some strange, hidden influence with her. But he could not wring a word of Katusha's whereabouts from her, for all that influence, though he believed that she knew. In his distress at the fruitlessness of his search, his worried mind disgorged a little more of his doings on the Eve of St. John. Once, coming up the stairs of the vicarage at night, his eye caught the bottom of the tall mirror on the landing, and as it travelled up it, he had a fleeting vision of himself in a strange outlandish dress with a bearskin flung over his shoulders, his face flushed fierce and terrifying, his eyes wild and mazed. And before the vision flashed swiftly away, he knew that so he had seen himself in some other such mirror at the Finn woman's house, and stood staring stupidly at the dull, black-garbed clerical figure which took its place in the glass. Once again, in a dream, he saw the faces of men and women, singing, and heard the yells of "Yarilo! Yarilo!"

The vision and the dream distressed him but little; the longing to find Katusha left small room in his mind for any other strong feeling. Once or twice he found himself debating seriously with himself whether he ought not to have married her,

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and secured her as a helper in his work for good and all; and he found that he could not dismiss the absurd idea with the ridicule it deserved. With some odd fancy that it would bring him nearer to her, perhaps help him find her, he set himself to learn the mongrel dialect of the Russian slums. It was a somewhat pathetic sight, for he had all his life been very dull at languages. However, he found no lack of helpers in the task among those whom he had helped in sickness or poverty, and made some way with it.

The winter wore through, and through it the clergy of Little St. Barnabas maintained their untiring struggle against the misery and sickness of the parish. Time and work had somewhat blunted Aloysius's longing for Katusha, though he never failed to follow up a clue which might bring him to her. Then toward the end of January he was attacked by influenza. He had never known a day's illness since the measles of his childhood, and now he seemed to pay heavily for the years of immunity; the attack left him weak and feeble. With some stubbornness he refused to go away for a change, and got to work again before he was fit for it. On the Sunday after he was about again Marriott noticed a change in the manner of the heathen; they left the church talking vehemently with one another, frowning and distressed, some of them, to all seeming, almost terrified. During that week Aloysius also perceived a change in the people. The faces of the Finns and

Lascars were no longer respectful and awed ; their eyes were full of distrust and fear. He told Marriott of the change ; and Marriott, with a serious face, begged him to go away till his strength came back.

" You're mixed up in a very curious primitive business," he said. " At least that's my idea. Part of it is that as long as a man is well and strong these people virtually worship him ; as soon as he grows feeble in any way, they kill him."

Aloysius was somewhat daunted, but, with a sick man's obstinacy, he said that it was absurd, and refused to go. Three nights later his colleagues were out, and there came an urgent call to a dying child. In defiance of the orders of the doctor and the commands of the vicar, Aloysius put on his hat and coat and went. His way lay through the slums of the Russians ; he went slowly, and presently a little crowd was following him. He thought it was the self-appointed bodyguard which had followed him so long, and went along careless of it, when there was a sudden rush, and a blow on the back of the head sent him reeling against the wall. He twisted round, got his back against the wall, and hit out. They were near a lamp, and he found that the group attacking him was half Russians, half Lascars, and he read murder in their fanatic eyes. They were armed with sticks and sand-bags, and struck at his head. Their numbers hampered them, or the end would have come sooner, and he made some show of defence.



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In the middle of it he caught the flash of a knife in the hand of a Lascar dashing at him to stab ; but a big Finn struck the man down, crying : " No blood ! No blood ! " Aloysius had only time to think it an odd act, when a blow on the head knocked him senseless. A Lascar threw himself on top of him, set his thumbs in his throat, and strangled him.

Three minutes later two policemen, summoned by a Jewess whose sick child Aloysius had helped nurse, came dashing down the street, blowing their whistles, and the crowd fled. The policemen made no doubt that Aloysius was dead ; but with the help of some of the slum-dwellers they picked him up and carried him to the doctor's. As they went, a loud wailing of women broke out not only in the slum they were in, but in the surrounding slums ; all the women in that quarter seemed to be wailing.

When the doctor saw Aloysius he shook his head and said, " No use." But he was young and an enthusiast, and when, on looking into his injuries, he found the black thumb-marks on his throat, he set about trying to get his lungs working again. The policemen were strong and willing, and the three of them worked his arms, and rubbed and kneaded him vigorously. They did not see a sign of life for nearly two hours, and another hour passed before he was breathing evenly with a fair pulse. Then the doctor found that he was suffering from concussion of the brain.



They carried him to the vicarage. He lay insensible for two days, and when he came to himself, he was slow mending. But at last the day came when the doctor talked of letting him eat chicken, and that afternoon his nurse went out to take the air. He lay drowsily watching the faint winter sunlight at the windows, enjoying a pleasant sense of getting again his grip on life, when there came a knock, and the maid ushered in Katusha.

Aloysius's eyes opened very wide in an unbelieving stare. She ran to the bedside, and caught his hand in both hers, crying, "They told me you were dead!"

Aloysius gripped feebly one of her hands, and said: "You've come back! You've come back at last!"

"Yes, I come back," said Katusha.

He lay still, staring at her, and saw that her eyes were heavy with weeping, that she was thinner and even paler.

"What on earth did you go away for? You knew how I should miss you," he said querulously.

He felt the little quiver of joy that ran through her; but she shook her head, and said, "I better go."

"What for? You know I wanted you."

She shook her head again, and said: "That way only trouble come. You rich and Christian; I poor and Jewess. What good in it?"

"Nonsense! I want you. I'm going to have you. You'll have to marry me," said Aloysius, with something of his old masterfulness.

Katusha shook her head, but a sudden flame shone in her eyes. Aloysius began feebly to draw her down to kiss her; of a sudden she burst into tears, and cried: "You my lord! I do what you say! I try to run away; it no good." And she bent down, and they kissed.

Ten minutes later Marriott came into the room to find Katusha, flushed and with shining eyes, sitting on the bed, with Aloysius's hand in hers.

"Hello! The wanderer returned! How are you, Katusha? We've missed you badly. I hope you're going to stay," he said.

"She's going to stay with me, at any rate," said Aloysius. "We're going to be married."

"The dickens you are!" said Marriott. "Well, well, it's probably an excellent thing for both of you. You're both interested keenly in the same work, though I've no doubt, if you weren't an orphan, Aloysius, there would be a family row. I'm sure I congratulate you."

"Thank you," said Aloysius; and, after a pause, "And I shall know at last what happened on the Eve of St. John."

"I doubt it," said Marriott. "What does Katusha say?"

Katusha flushed, and shook her head.

"Oh, you're too tiresome with your mysteries, both of you!" cried Aloysius.

"That's just it; they *are* mysteries—the Mysteries, indeed," said Marriott. "You leave them alone. It's for your own sake I won't tell

you about them. You're a good Anglican, and the mysteries are unsettling. But I will tell you one thing; you've been—

'The priest who slew the slayer,  
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"I'm glad to hear it," said Aloysius; and his clasp of Katusha's hand tightened.

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